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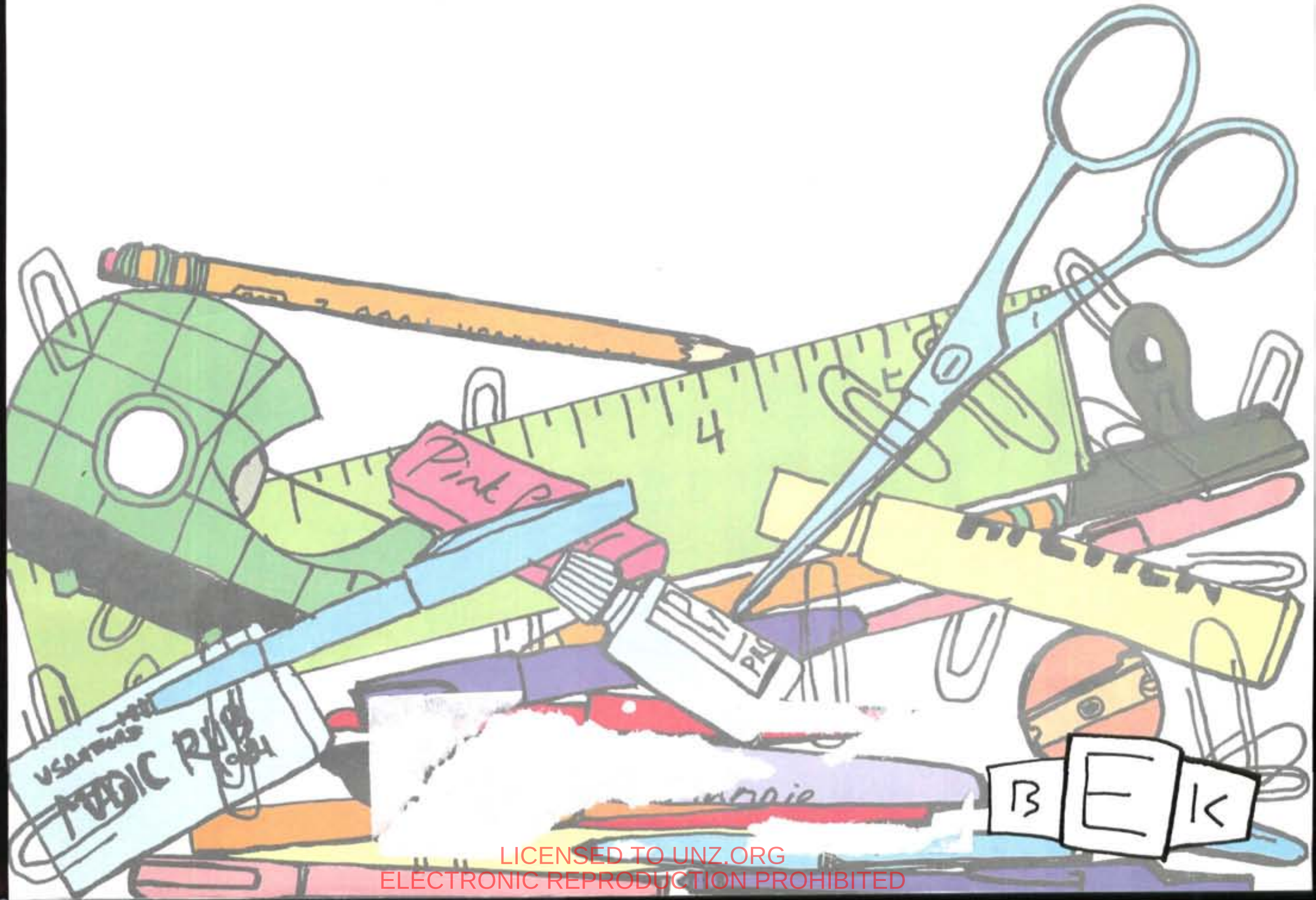
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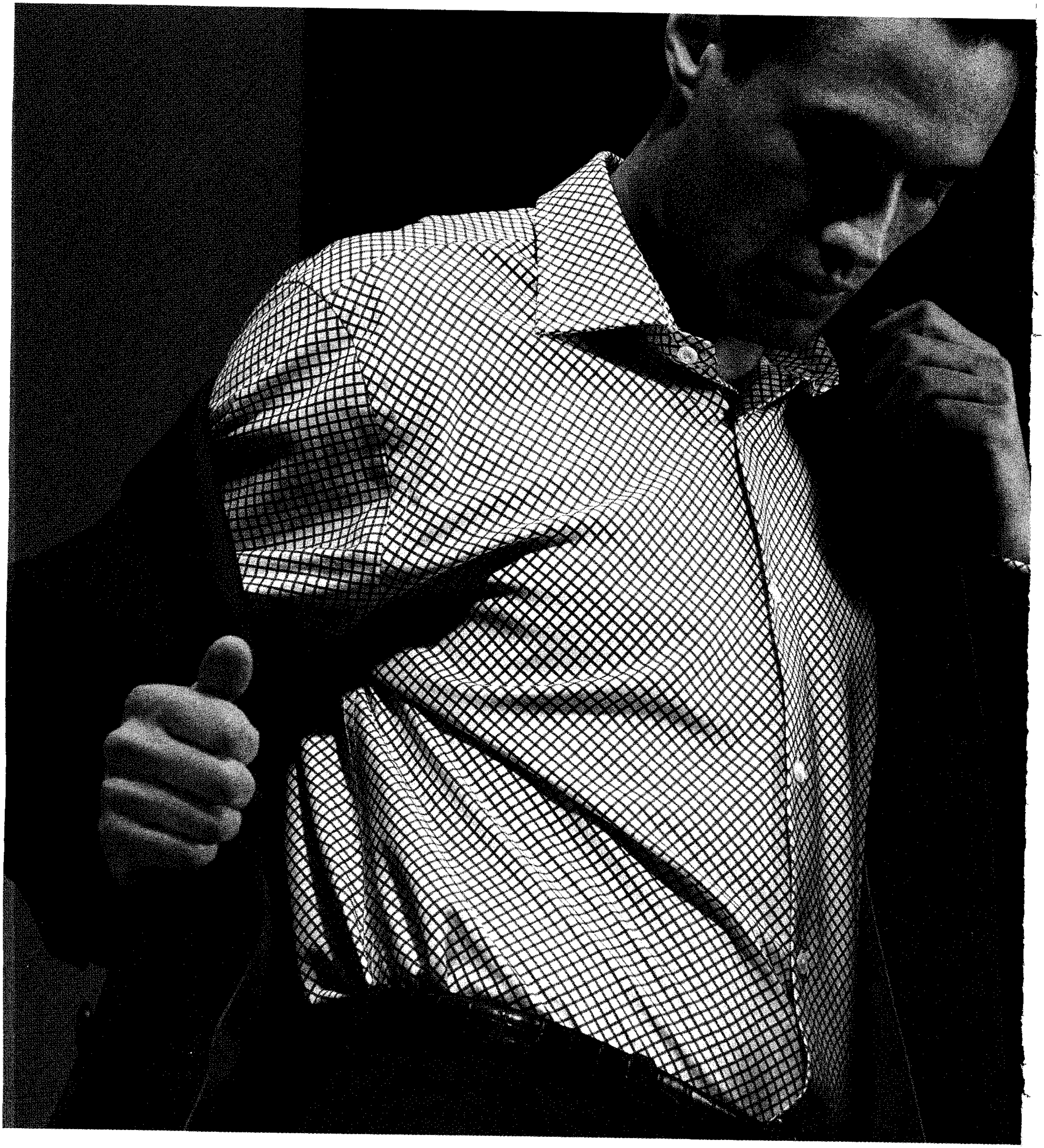

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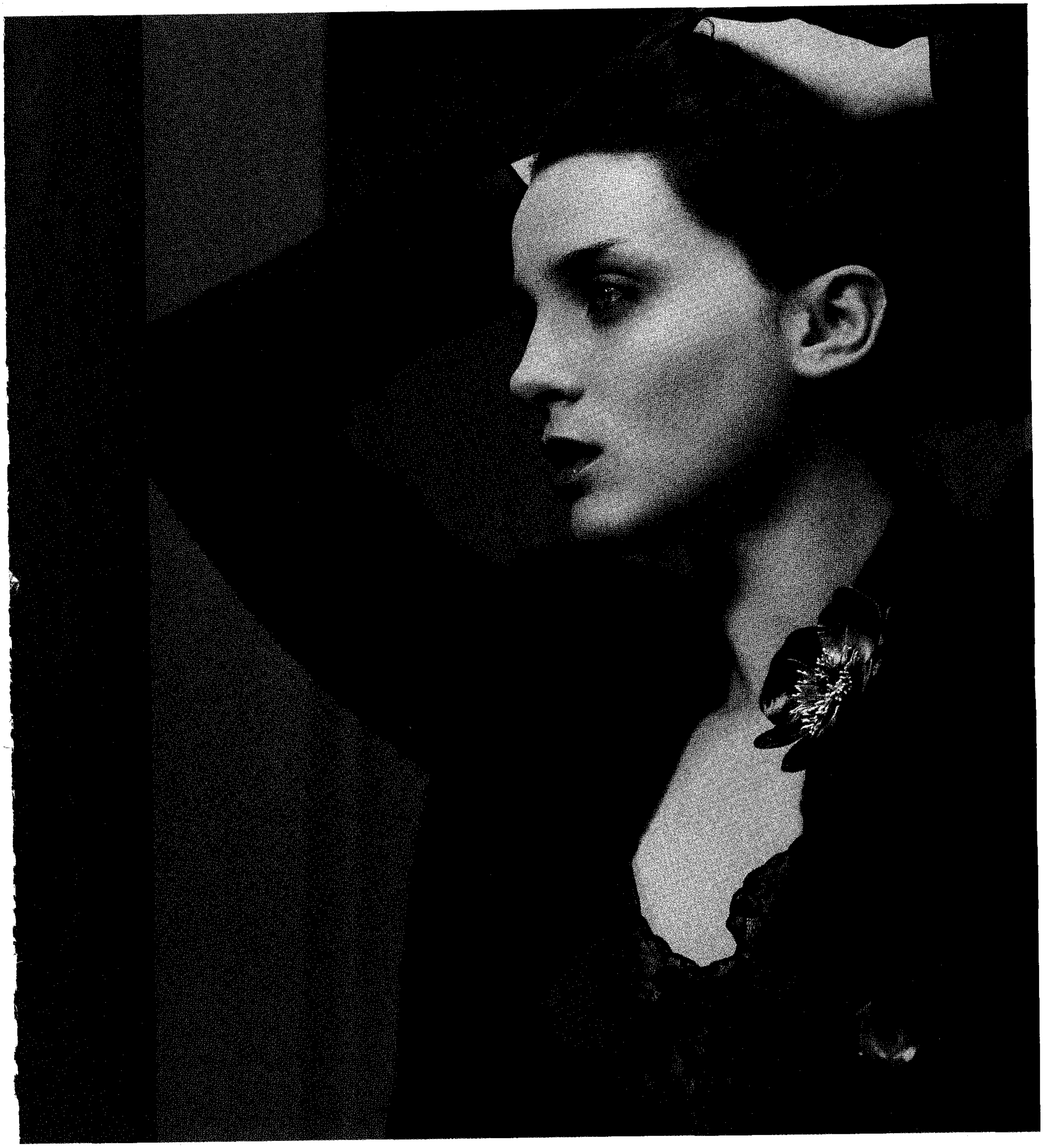

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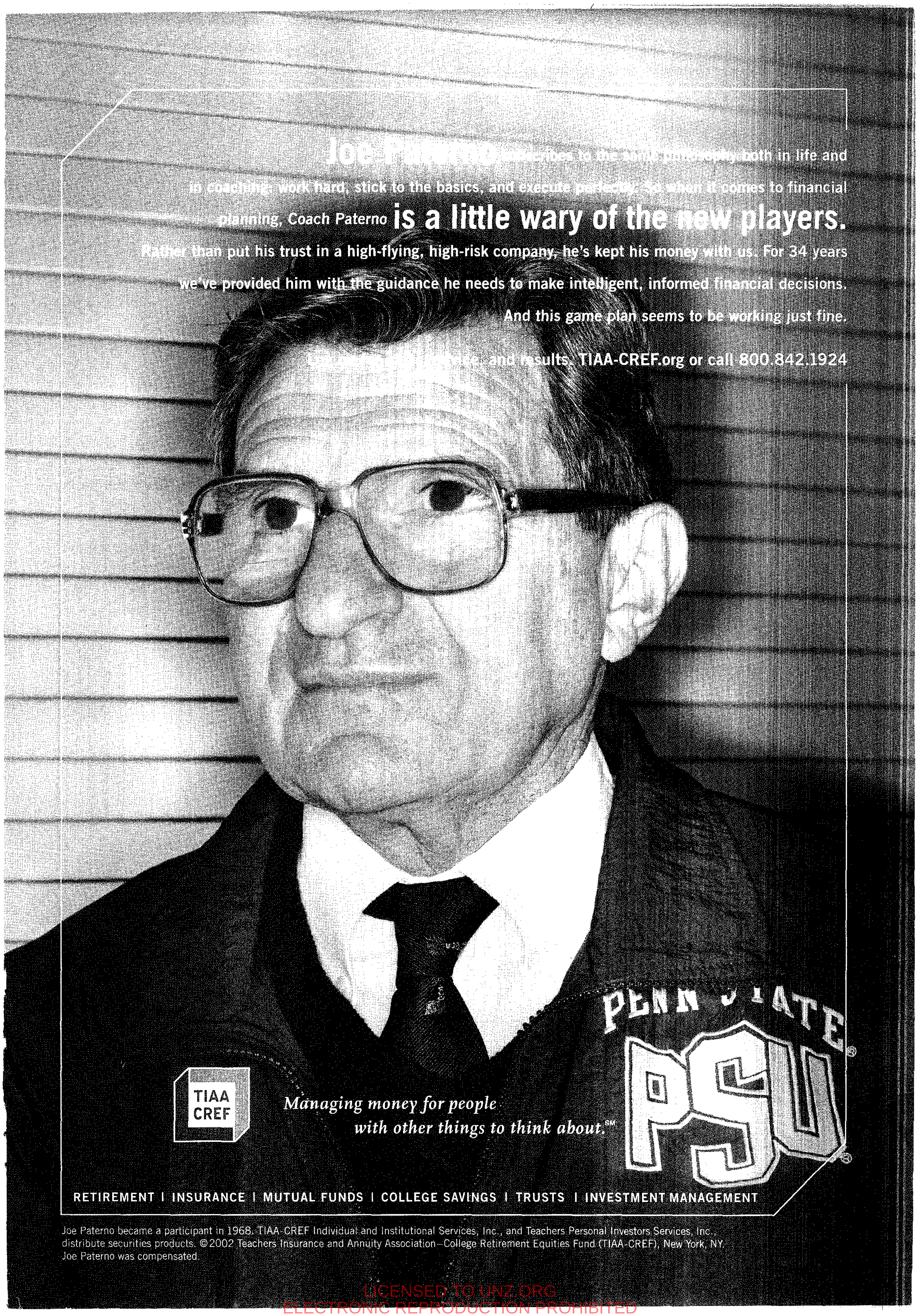

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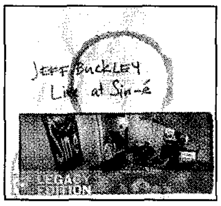

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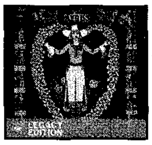

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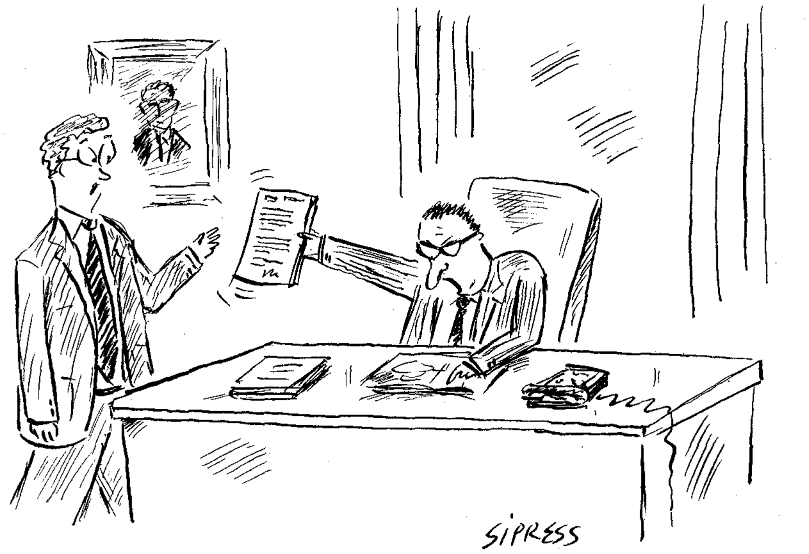
James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 36) writes a regular column on business and finance.

Marianne Moore (Poem, p. 96) died in 1972. A complete collection of her poems, "The Poems of Marianne Moore," will be published in October. ♦



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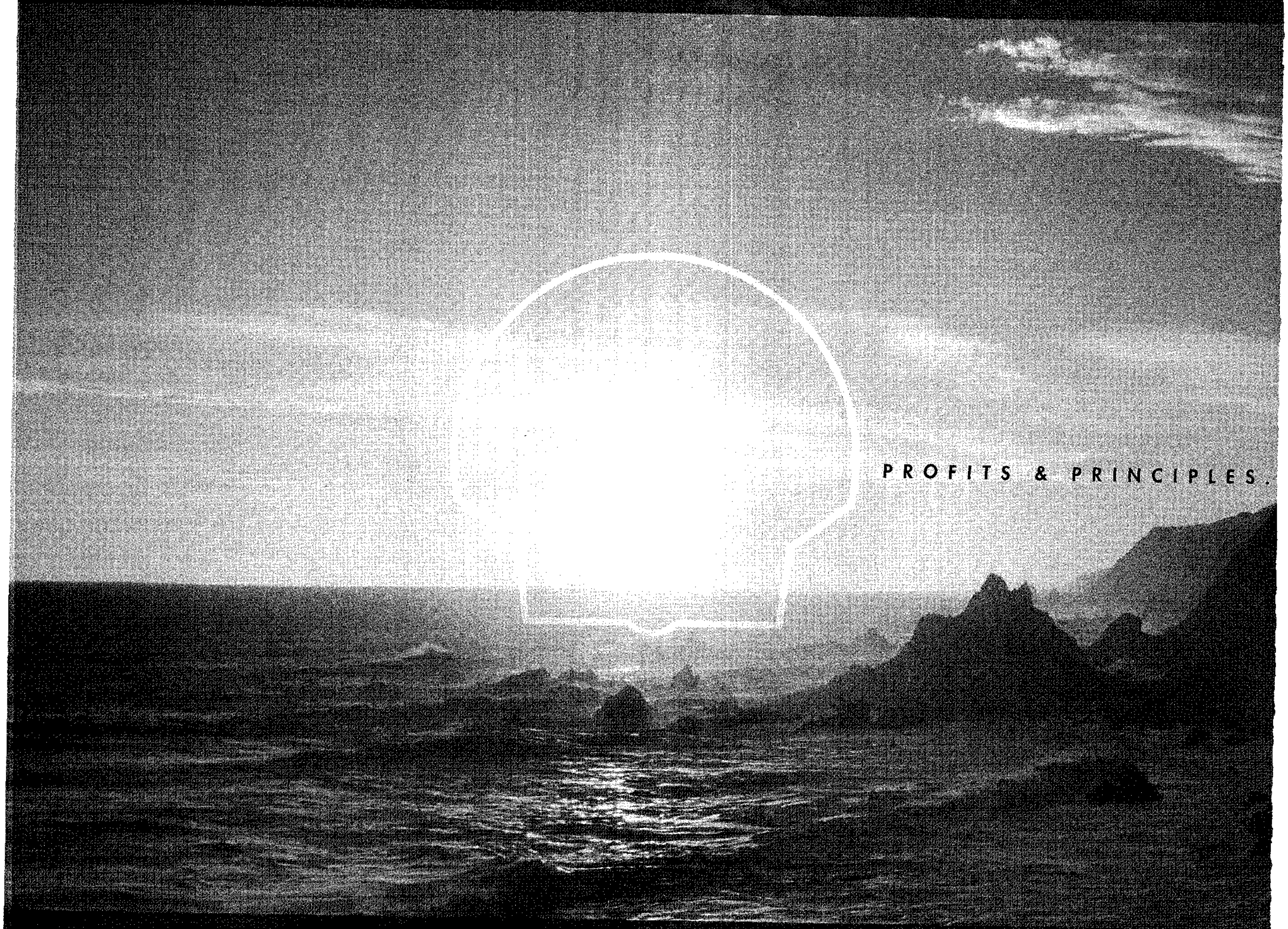

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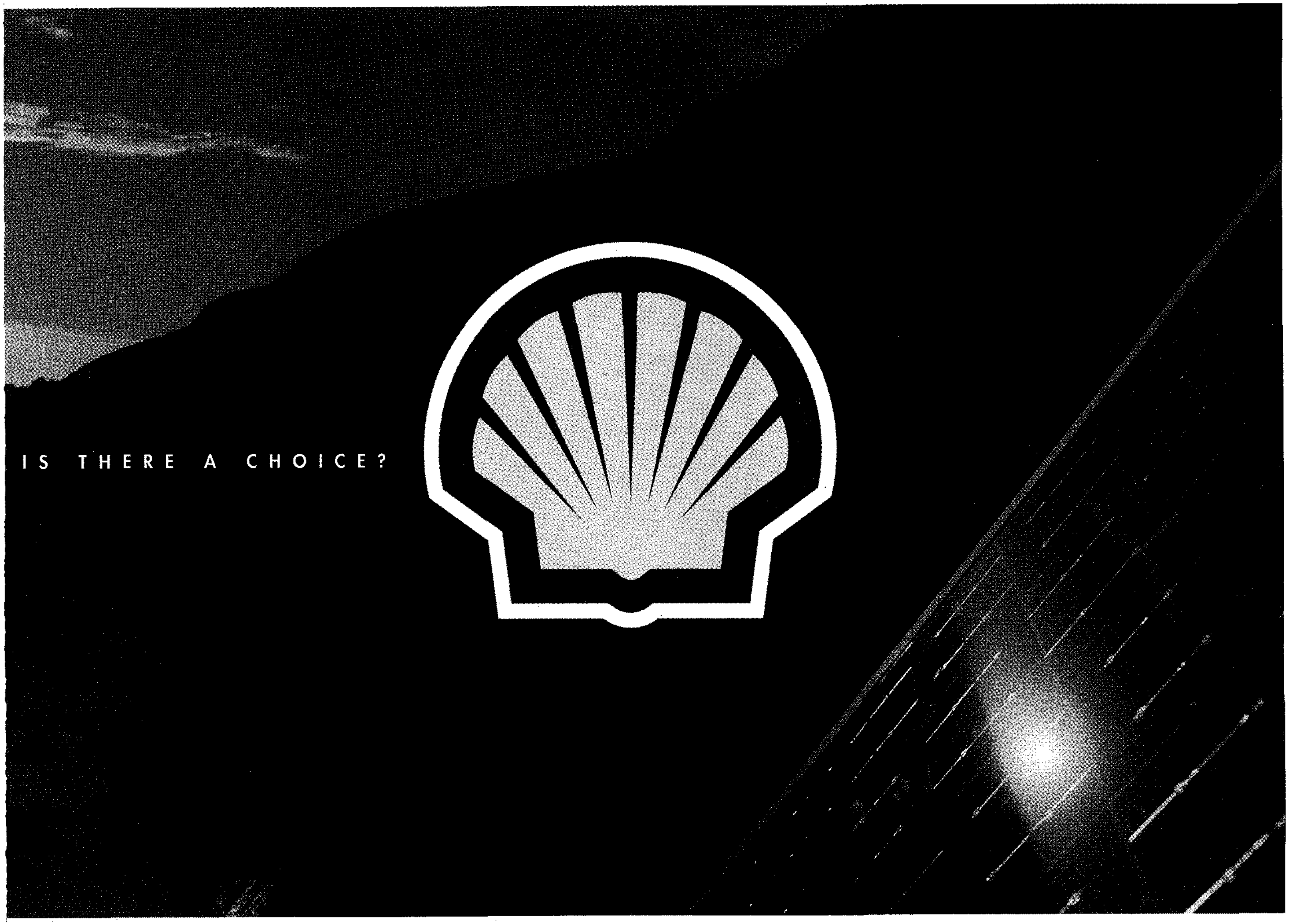

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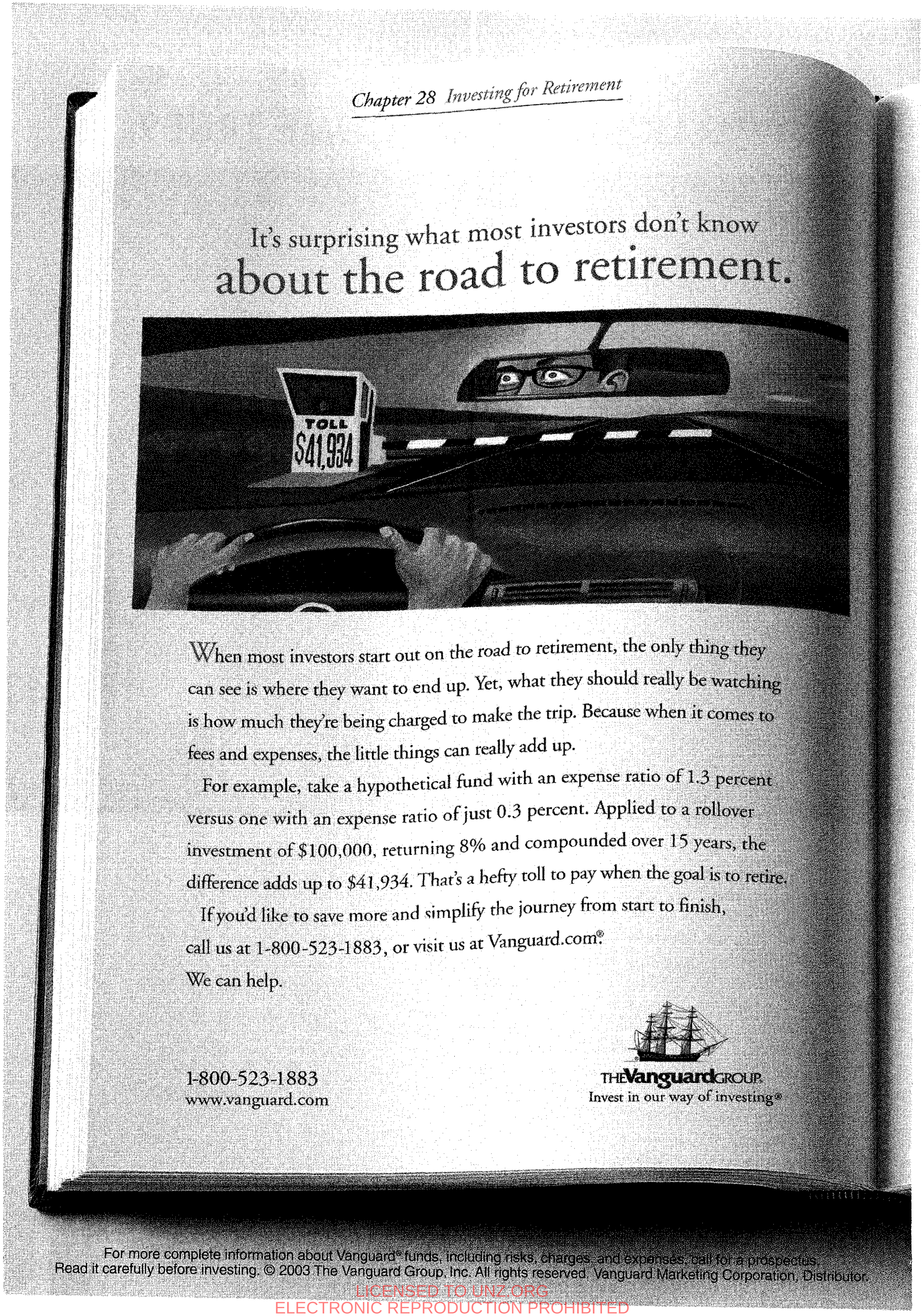

Chapter 28 Investing for Retirement

It's surprising what most investors don't know

about the road to retirement.

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THE MAIL

RUM AND MUTINY

As a Queenslander, I remember the excitement caused by the discovery of the remains of the Pandora, the ship sent in pursuit of the Bounty mutineers ("Wreck of the Pandora," August 4th). But the story of Captain Bligh's later career and his continuing link with mutiny—and Australia—is also provocative. In 1806, he became governor of the colony of New South Wales and its main settlement, Sydney, north of Botany Bay (which Bligh's mentor, Captain Cook, had charted). Although Bligh apparently won the respect of many settlers, the Army officer corps resented his attempts to bring to heel the nice little business it had developed running the young colony's liquor trade, which had earned it the nickname the Rum Corps. Amid allegations of authoritarianism (echoing the Bounty episode), the Rum Corps arrested Bligh in 1808 and kept him at bay until he was replaced as governor, two years later. Despite two mutinies, Bligh remained a senior officer in the Royal Navy until his death, in 1817; he is still a controversial figure in Australia's history and memory. I will leave it to others to speculate about what, if anything, rum and rebellion had to do with shaping the Australian identity.

Peter Tesch
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
Australian Mission to the United Nations
New York City

Captain Bligh's original mission of bringing breadfruit trees from Tahiti to the West Indies, which Caroline Alexander mentions in passing, deserves more comment than it is generally given. At the time the Bounty sailed, the English colonies in the West Indies were producing a handsome profit from the labor of African slaves on plantations on Jamaica and other islands. The slaves' food, miserable as it was both in quantity and quality, still cost the planters more than they wanted to spend. Members of the Royal Society came up with the idea of introducing the Polynesian breadfruit tree into the region. Since this plant grows wild, it was thought that the slaves could subsist on breadfruit and reduce even further the cost of keeping them alive. The plan was frustrated when Fletcher Christian sank the pots containing the young trees. Bligh and others bemoaned the loss, but it's worth remembering that one of the motivating forces that set the Bounty on its course was slavery.

David Kelvin
Oakland, Calif.

SENT HOME SICK

Jerome Groopman's article on hypochondria ("Sick with Worry," August 11th) made a fascinating companion piece to Laura Hillenbrand's history of her struggle with chronic fatigue syndrome ("A Sudden Illness," July 7th). Hillenbrand's case exemplifies the issues faced by those who have serious ailments that do not fit existing diagnostic classifications, or, as with C.F.S., classifications that are relatively new and controversial. For all our technology, medical science cannot objectively measure basic symptoms such as pain and fatigue. Those whose lab results do not support a neat conclusion are at risk of misdiagnosis and mistreatment, or are taken for hypochondriacs and sent home or to psychiatrists. Further work on how to handle true hypochondria would benefit many who do not suffer from it, if only by eliminating yet another false diagnosis.

Stephen Blough
Rockville, Md.

CORRECTION: In David Denby's review of "Seabiscuit," David McCullough is incorrectly identified as the narrator of Ken Burns's documentary "Baseball" (The Current Cinema, August 4th). The narrator was John Chancellor.

•

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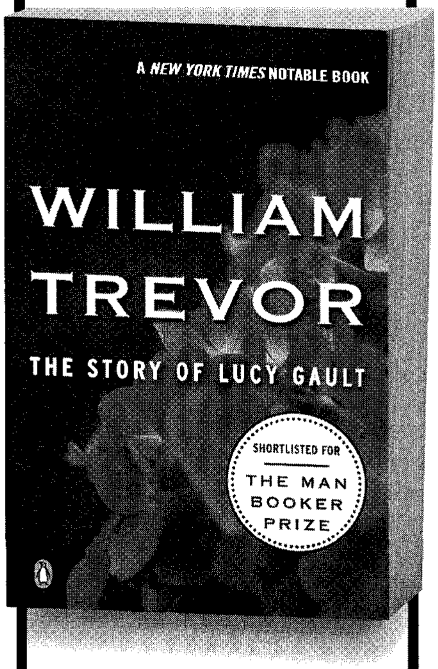

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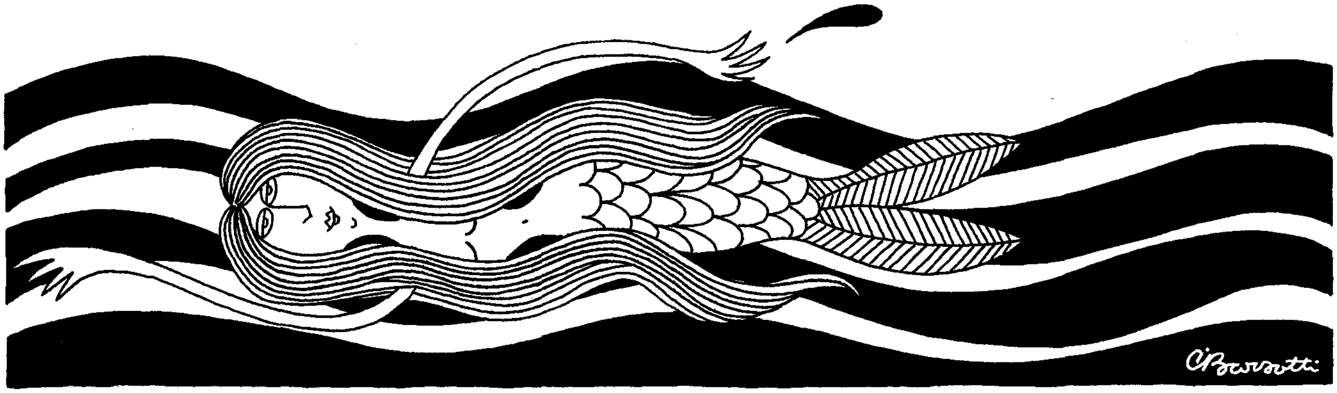

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BERKSHIRE VILLAGE IDIOT
Michael Isaac Connor is a one-man cast of thirty-three, in a new comedy about his small-town childhood directed by Barry Edelstein. In previews. Opens Sept. 7 at 7. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOLD GIRLS
The 29th Street Rep presents a play by Rona Munro about four women making the best of things in violence-ridden Belfast. Directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser. Previews begin Sept. 8. (212 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

CHOCOLATE IN HEAT
The young playwright Betty Shamieh stars in a Semitic Root production of her play about the complicated realities of growing up Arab-American. Directed by Sam Gold. Opens Sept. 4 at 8. (Tank, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-868-4444.)

THE HARLEQUIN STUDIES
The Signature Theatre Company kicks off its year-long Bill Irwin festival with a play that uses acrobatics and live music to explore the many sides of the commedia dell'arte character. The playwright leads the cast and also directs. With original music by Doug Skinner, sets by Doug Stein, costumes by Catherine Zuber, and lights by James Vermeulen. Previews begin Sept. 3. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
The musical about a bloodthirsty extraterrestrial plant and the wimpy florist who becomes its slave gets a Broadway revival. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY
In a popular downtown musical that is now moving to the Zipper's Belt Theatre, the score and the cast are rejiggered during every performance. Jimmy Bennett, John Gregorio, and Stephan Guarino star; Matt Cohen is in charge of the music. In previews. (336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

OMNIUM GATHERUM
Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros bring their critically acclaimed dinner-party-à-clef play to New York from Louisville, where it had its première last spring. Kristine Nielsen leads a cast of "celebrity" guests, playing their hostess—a woman who has a famous cooking show and heads a commercial home-design empire. Directed by Will Frears. Previews begin Sept. 9. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

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RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS
Playwrights Horizons begins its season with a new play by Craig Wright that stars Heather Graham, in her New York stage début, as a Midwestern ad exec who goes through with a blind date the day after 9/11. With Kalimi A. Baxter, Hamish Linklater, Jesse J. Perez, and Colleen Werthmann. Directed by Michael John Garcés. Previews begin Sept. 5. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

TRUMBO
Nathan Lane stars in a remounted production of Christopher Trumbo's play about his courageous father, Dalton Trumbo, a blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter who refused to bend to the demands of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Directed by Peter Askin. Two previews on Sept. 3. Opens Sept. 4 at 8. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

URBAN STAGES
The theatre company begins its twentieth-anniversary season with two comic, bittersweet solo works about the American immigrant experience, which run in repertory: "In Spite of Myself," Antoinette LaVecchia's evocation of her relationship with her Italian-born mother, and "Origins of Happiness," Felix Pire's collection of stories about Cuban-Americans. "In Spite of Myself" opens Sept. 3 at 8; "Origins of Happiness" opens Sept. 6 at 8. (259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AVENUE Q
This musical puppet-and-people show has much to recommend it: an exceptionally gifted cast, a strong book by Jeff Whitty, equally strong music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and the splendid direction of Jason Moore. The remarkable Ann Harada stands out—a funny girl who can sing, act, and let the audience in on the joke all at the same time. Harada's character, Christmas Eve, a Japanese-born therapist who can't seem to book a client, lives on Avenue Q, in an unspecified New York City borough, with her fiancé, Brian (Jordan Gelber), an unemployed caterer who once harbored dreams of becoming a comedian on late-night TV. "But I'm thirty-two and as you can see / I'm not. Oh well. / It sucks to be me," he sings, in the show's opening number. Humans act alongside cloth co-stars—such as Princeton, a bright-eyed college grad, and two girls who want to date him, a kindergarten teacher's aide named Kate Monster and a lounge singer called Lucy T. Slut (both performed by the great Stephanie D'Abruzzo). Is it possible to be attracted to a puppet? D'Abruzzo gives Lucy so much verve that when she saunters offstage in D'Abruzzo's hand—all the puppets are handheld—you want to follow her with wolf whistles. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/11/03.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BIG RIVER
In this lively, ingeniously staged production, which features deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing actors, the American Sign Language adaptation of the classic musical gets its New York début. The play, based on Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn," has a witty book by William Hauptman and a rousing score and lyrics by Roger Miller, and the big musical numbers don't detract from the subtlety of Twain's exposition; instead, the songs and performances boost Twain's vibrant language and wild leaps of humor. A co-production of the Deaf West and Roundabout theatre companies. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. (American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. Closes Sept. 21.)

BOOBS! THE MUSICAL
Donna Drake directs a six-person cast in a staged revue of the saucy songbook of the Eisenhower-era songwriter and chanteuse Ruth Wallis, author of "Johnny's Got a Yo-Yo," "Drill 'Em All," and other winking ballads. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-239-6200.)

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
Todd Robbins, a light-bulb-eating carnival impresario and the dean of Brooklyn's Coney Island Sideshow School, is one of the last purveyors of the tradition of the American freak show. Here, he teams up with a hirsute dancing dwarf named Little Jimmy, Twistina the Rubber Lady, the Flying Ebola Brothers, and a handful of other freaks and geeks to bring the magic of the midway to a wider audience and to open the curtain on its secrets. Robbins even draws spectators into the act, although he doesn't encourage them to follow his example and hammer nails into their nostrils. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.)

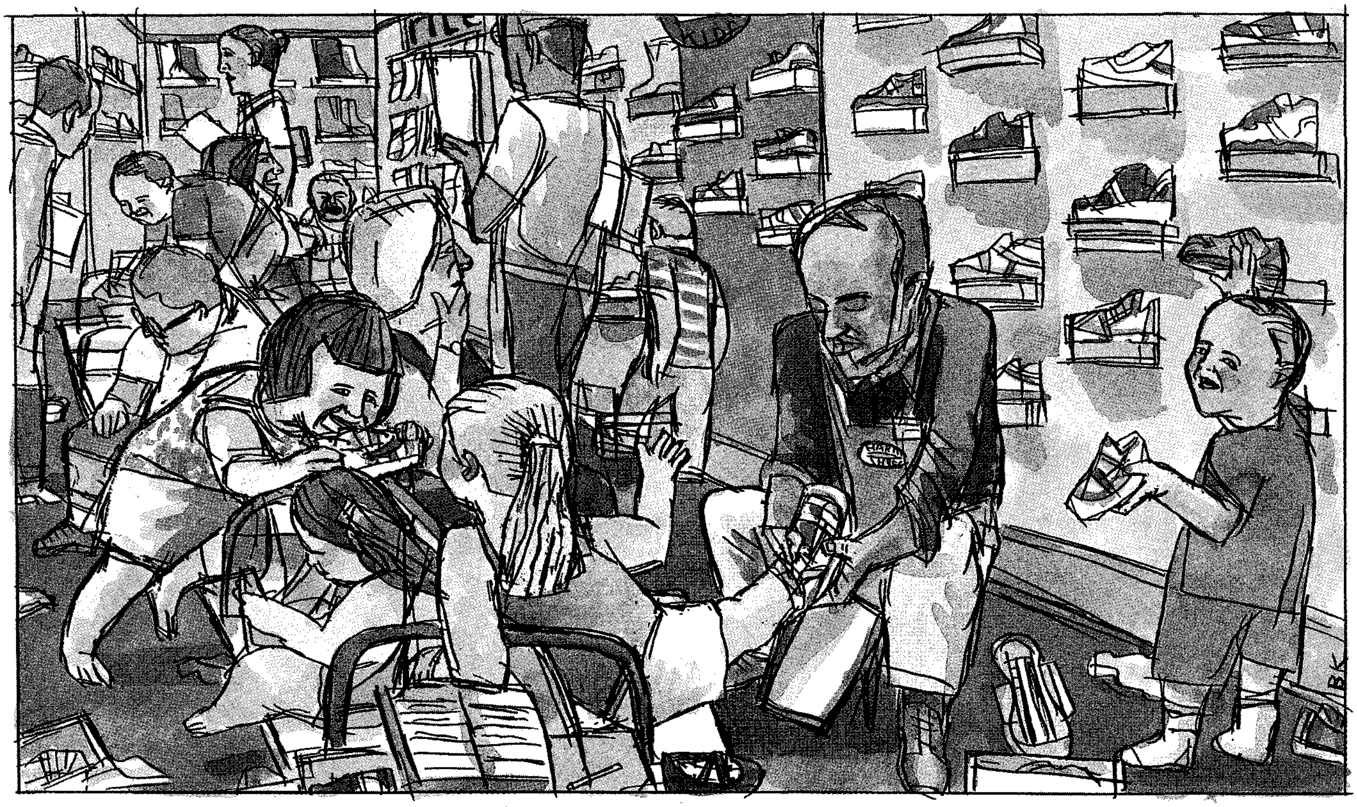
EDGE
In Sylvia Plath's most famous poem, "Daddy," she memorialized her father, Otto, writing, "Every woman adores a Fascist, / The boot in the face, the brute / Brute heart of a brute like you." When she met and married the English poet Ted Hughes, she found Daddy all over again, the poem implies; and when she committed suicide, at the age of thirty, the two men were left notionally guilty by association. This is the emotional trajectory Plath's fans trace when they think of her, and Paul Alexander, the author of two books about Plath, is no exception. In the

& ORK N.Y. 1001 LANG.COM **HELMUT LANG**

one-woman monologue "Edge," which he directs and which he derived from his biography "Rough Magic," he has an agenda: he uses the facts of Plath's life to prove that Otto and Ted made her do it. Still, in a troubling and powerful performance, Angelica Torn makes us see what the script does not—the extent to which Plath, who believed that she didn't exist unless she was being subjugated by a man, manufactured her own downfall. (8/11/03) (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. Closes Sept. 20.)

THE FEAST OF THE GOAT / PILAR RIOJA

The Repertorio Español closes the summer season with two shows, running in repertory. One, a play based on Mario Vargas Llosa's novel "The Feast of the Goat," about the Dominican despot General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, conjures the mood of a Saul Steinberg cartoon: violence, pomp, and sexual corruption. The director, Jorge Alí Triana (who adapted the novel with his daughter Verónica), sustains the spell throughout this stirring production. In Spanish, with simultaneous-translation headsets available in English. The other show is an evening of Spanish dance by the renowned flamenco artist Pilar Rioja, who performs flamenco and other classical and traditional Spanish dances in a program that follows the progress of dance on the Iberian peninsula from Roman to recent times, with and without castanets. (Gramercy Arts, 138 E. 27th St. 212-889-2850. Closes Sept. 7.)



SOLE SURVIVORS *Summer's end becomes official for West Side moms this week with the obligatory before-school visit to Harry's Shoes, the ancient (well, twenty-nine-year-old) souk and cultural center at Broadway and Eighty-third Street, where masterly, wail-proof salespersons preside like vicars over Junior's ritual step up from Jumping-Jacks to that first pair of Merrells. Over in the next aisle you can spot a dad or two regarding their Teva-clad feet in the floor mirror and thinking, Uh-oh, maybe another pair of good old Sebago mocs is more me after all.—Roger Angell*

BEN KATCHOR

THE LOVE-HUNGRY FARMER

Des Keogh stars in a poignant quasi-comedy about a bachelor farmer's efforts to find himself a wife, which he adapted from the stories of the Irish writer John B. Keane. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

LYPSINKA: AS I LAY LIP-SYNCHING

John Epperson's glamorous, imperious camp diva gets a new outing in a Tweed Theatreworks production. Directed by Kevin Malony, with set and lighting by Mark T. Simpson and costumes by Bryant Hoven. (Show, 135 W. 41st St. 212-868-4444. Closes Sept. 14.)

MATT & BEN

This is one not to miss. In addition to being short—just over an hour—it's goofy, funny, and improbably believable. In captivating performances, Mindy Kaling (a compact, Indian-American woman in a tracksuit) and Brenda Withers (a lanky Wasp in khakis and a rumpled button-down) play Ben (Affleck) and Matt (Damon), best friends from the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, who are holed up in 1997 in a filthy apartment, squabbling as they try to write a script. When the complete screenplay to "Good Will Hunting" literally drops from the ceiling, they are both floored and their friendship is tested. Kaling and Withers have created one of the most appealing male-bonding stories since Damon and Pythias, or Oscar and Felix. And within minutes you don't even notice that they're not male. Directed by David Warren. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

NAMEDROPPING

David Rothenberg's fifty years in the theatre have allowed him to brush up against the stoles (or ascots) of Elizabeth Taylor, Bette Davis, Richard Burton, John Gielgud, and other icons of stage and screen. In a one-man show, he brings five decades of backstage drama and dish to center stage. Directed by Marcia Jean Kurtz. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

NINE

In this elegant revival of Arthur Kopit and Maury Yeston's 1982 musical—an adaptation of Fellini's "8½"—Antonio Banderas plays Guido Contini, a film director whose genius is inextricable from his childlike narcissism. Good-looking, confident, and amusing, Banderas has a European restraint that only magnifies his passionate nature. He also has a fine voice. The other characters are satellites around Planet Guido: his put-upon wife (Mary Stuart Masterson), his battle-axe producer (Chita Rivera), and his tenacious and lubricious mistress, Carla (Jane Krakowski), who descends semi-nude from the rafters. Directed by David Leveaux. (4/21 & 28/03) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

PLAYING BURTON

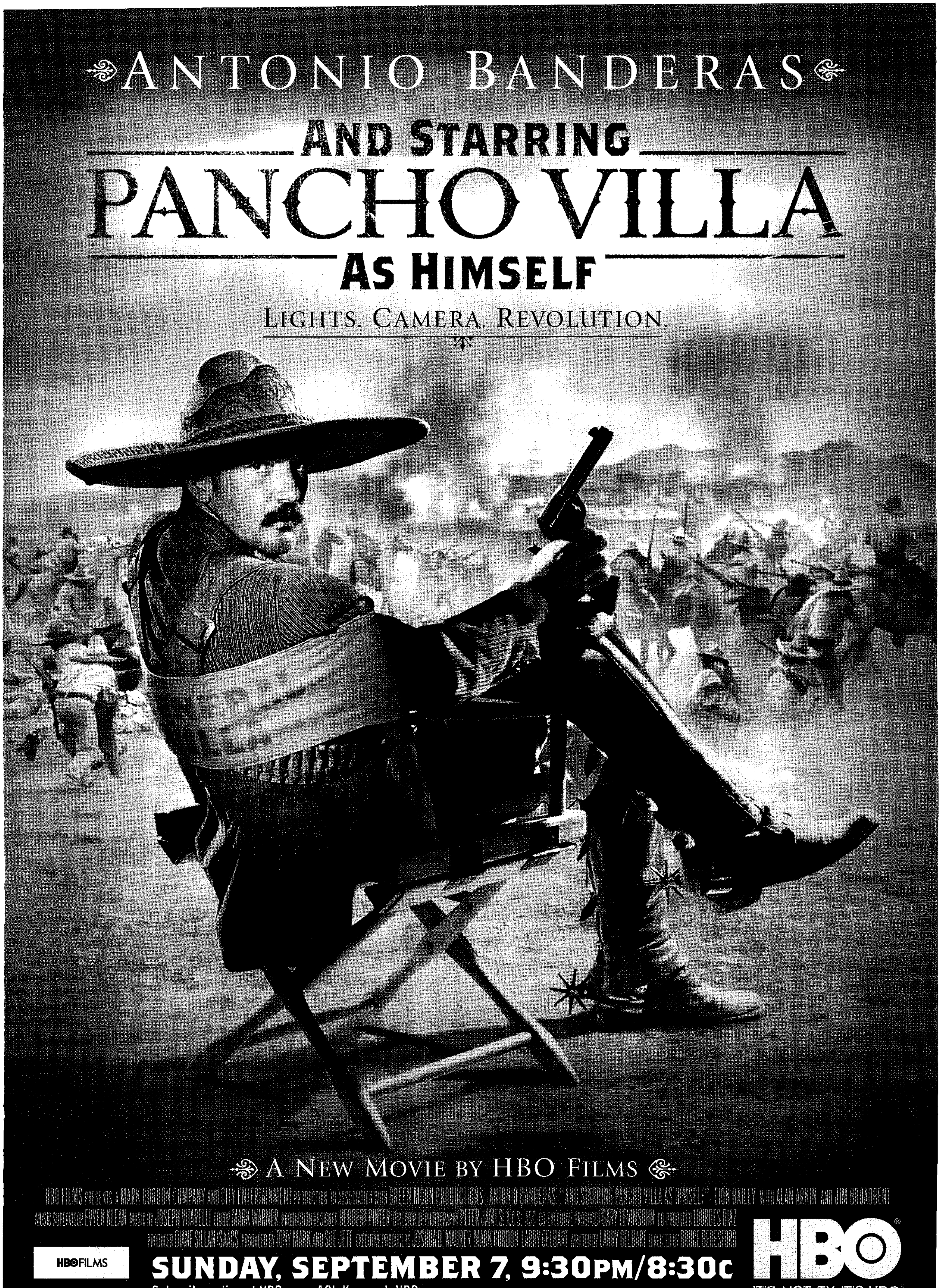
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents a one-man show about the Welsh actor Richard Burton, written and directed by one of his countrymen, Mark Jenkins, and performed by the Burton look-alike Brian Mallon. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Closes Sept. 14.)

THE THING ABOUT MEN

Doris Dörrie's ruefully resigned comedy of modern immorality, "Men," has become an uproarious musical—with exuberant songs about workaholism, betrayal, and compromise, performed by a cast with nimble comic timing. When the cheating ad man Tom (Marc Kudisch, who nails the "lovable jerk" character and also has a great baritone) finds out that his wife (Leah Hocking) is having an affair, he hunts down her lover, Sebastian (the dreamy tenor Ron Bohmer), and moves in with him (incognito). Before meeting Sebastian, Tom sings, "I bet he still lives with his mother / His car is some ten-year-old bomb / He's fat and he's balding and, brother, / He's no competition for Tom." Cue Sebastian—who glides onto the stage, muscular, gentle, and Fabio-tressed, riding a bicycle. Jimmy Roberts' music buoyantly carries Joe DiPietro's excellent book and lyrics, and some of the best tunes ("Highway of Your Heart," "Me, Too") go to the mischievous Daniel Reichard and Jennifer Simard, who perform multiple caricature roles. The back wall of Richard Hoover's set is inlaid with concealed windows that slide open to reveal scene-setting video images. As the projections change, the stage morphs into a suburban living room, a scuzzy artist's loft, a dive bar, or an office. Like the set, the show flashes enough reality at the audience to keep things plausible, enough fantasy to keep things frisky. Directed by Mark Clements, with musical staging by Rob Ashford. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHAT'S YOUR KARMA?

For people who go in for this sort of thing, Lilith Dove's spooky, sandalwood-scented evening of

ANTONIO BANDERAS
AND STARRING
PANCHO VILLA
AS HIMSELF

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HBO FILMS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 9:30PM/8:30c

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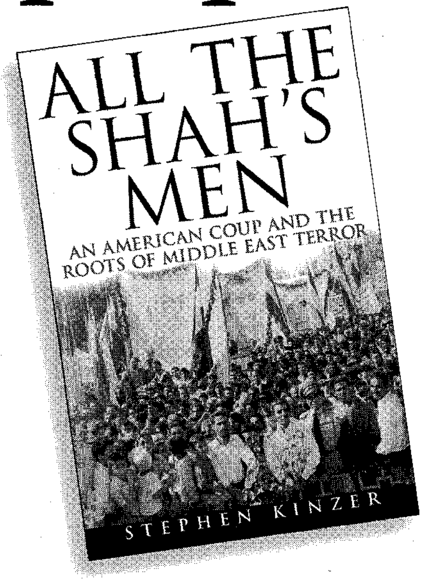

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—*The Washington Post Book World*

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—*The New York Times*

"Kinzer's brisk, vivid account is filled with beguiling details. . . . A helpful reminder of an oft-neglected piece of Middle Eastern history."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Entertaining and sometimes shocking. . . . Should give pause to would-be regime changers."
—*BusinessWeek*

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past-lives performance art will amaze and entertain. Onstage, eyes shut, the English clairvoyant takes the measure of the psychic auras of assorted audience participants, delivers a rapid torrent of preternaturally specific details on the ground their souls covered in preceding centuries, then advises them how to conduct their present lives to pick up the thread of the past. At one recent séance, audience members were said to include two prior residents of the lost continent of Atlantis, a courtesan from fifteenth-century France, a witness to a crucifixion in the time of Christ, and a plantation slave. (Producers Club, 358 W. 44th St. 212-352-3101.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.
CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.
TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.
TALKING HEADS
Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-1400. (Closes Sept. 7.)
THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"THE PHANTOM PROJECT—TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY SEASON"
Before there was the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, there was simply Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, two promising young dancers who were also life partners. Now celebrating its twentieth season, the company revisits its roots by presenting many of Jones and Zane's signature works with new dancers working in new combinations. "Continuous Replay" (1977), a game with forty-five hand and arm gestures that began as a solo for Zane, is performed by an ensemble; rotating soloists recreate "Floating the Tongue," the 1983 piece in which Jones described his own movements as he made them; and alternating casts (one of them all women) render the evocative duet "Blauvelt Mountain (A Fiction)" (1980). Rigorously avant-garde in its pedestrian movement and eccentric partnering, the dance uses whispered conversation to paint a portrait of a relationship; in revival, the balance between austerity and poignance is intensified by the memory of Zane, who died in 1988. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Sept. 9 at 8. Through Sept. 20.)

"DELUXE JOY PILOT"
The Berlin-based Compagnie Felix Ruckert opens the fall season at Dance Theatre Workshop with an edgily whimsical piece that conjures a nightclub setting and enlists the audience to join in hedonistic games. Spectators can recline among the dancers on soft platforms or inflatable chairs and participate in experiments with social boundaries. The result is more of a kinesthetic orgy than a composed dance; timid viewers may choose to hang back on the outskirts, but the only real risk in taking a seat onstage may be falling for one of the dexterous, bewitching dancers. (Bessie Schönberg Theatre, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 3-5 at 7 and Sept. 6 at 7 and 10.)

2003 DANCENOW/NYC FALL FESTIVAL
The surprises in store for the ninth annual Dancenow festival are still under wraps—last year, dancers swerved amid flying beach balls within the echoing, drained confines of the Carmine Street swimming pool—but a hundred and sixty artists dancing in ten days of performances are bound to come up with something fresh. The festival begins at Joe's Pub with cabaret dance shows curated by Keely Garfield and Lawrence Goldhuber, Clare Byrne and Nicholas Leichter, and Larry Keigwin—whose piece "Audition" draws audience members onto the club's tiny pub stage to join him in intricate arm movements. Other dances, many of them free of charge, occur across town, in Washington Heights, Harlem, the Joyce SoHo, and other venues. (For Joe's Pub events, call 212-239-6200. For complete festival schedule, call 718-850-2488 or see www.dancenownyc.org. Sept. 4-13.)

TWYLA THARP DANCE (AND FRIENDS)
Following a strong season at the Joyce, Twyla Tharp offers an afterthought, a revival of her 1970 piece "The One Hundreds" in a free performance at Battery Park. The dance's title refers to its base material of a hundred dance phrases, each eleven seconds long, which are executed in various combinations—e.g., two dancers do fifty each, five dancers do twenty—and at the end, a hundred people (not all of them professionals) perform the whole bunch at once. A study of duration rendered in silence, the work exemplifies Tharp's early severity, but it's also a spectacle: the cast is not only massive, it's studded with celebrities. (Sept. 9 at 8. For more information, call 212-219-9401. No tickets necessary.)

"SPIRIT AND NATURE"
The Lacy James Mereminne Dancers perform ethereal dances that evoke the symbolic connection between humans and nature, as exemplified by the mermaid—or, in Old English, the "mereminne"—abetted by flowing garments and the voices of Kate Bush, Donovan, and Yma Sumac. (Theatre of the Riverside Church, 91 Claremont Ave., at 121st St. 212-870-6784. Sept. 4-6 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL
Chris Carrabba, the tattoo-splattered pinup who is the front man for this band, has brought his somewhat cloyingly earnest brand of sensitive guy rock out of the basement and into the mainstream, to the teary-eyed, melancholy bliss of many a teen-

age girl. With the still quite sensitive but significantly screamier punk-pop band Brand New. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Sept. 4-5 at 6:45.)

CAKE / CHEAP TRICK

The cheeky Sacramento ensemble Cake teams up with the storied power-pop institution Cheap Trick for an evening of smirky irony and hook-laden guitar pop. With the Detroit Cobras and the Hackensaw Boys. (Roseland. Sept. 6 at 6:45.)

NEW YORK SALSA FESTIVAL

Gilberto Santa Rosa and his orchestra share the stage with the Fania All Stars, Oscar D'León, Victor Manuel, and many others. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. Sept. 6 at 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

LUNCHBOX FOOD CO.

357 West St. (646-230-9466)—On an industrial stretch of the West Side Highway, winched into a narrow lot between Weinstock Brothers Tools and an auto-repair shop, a stainless-steel-and-green diner lurks in the shadows, glinting. It sheds an aura of nostalgic luxury, with a long bar and retro-sleek leather banquettes visible through darkened windows.

Jennifer Kohns, who opened the restaurant last October with Lawrence Rudolph, trained at Judson Grill and Le Bernardin, and Rudolph trained at Joe's in Venice Beach, California, but in designing their neighborhood hangout, they put relaxation first. Once patrons walk into the main dining car, or past a row of trees to the roomy back garden, a surreal mood sets in, deepened by flickering lantern light.

The menu is simple. A single page offers "Snacks," "Vegetables & Greens," "Cheese," "Main," and "Sweets." The fare seems to have been chosen by a discerning globe-trotting backpacker: Monte Enebro cheese from Spain paired nicely with Iberian rosé, Caribbean guava-pork-and-*queso-blanco* empanadas, Mediterranean-style grilled baby octopus, or, back on home turf, two ears of grilled corn with chipotle aioli.

The muscular wait staff seem more likely to ask "Should I check the oil?" than "How is everything?" But once the "Main" arrives, wherever it is you're meant to be, you're staying. The food is lightly exotic: the grapefruit-poblano-and-peanut salad goes well with the roast blue snapper; the best thing about the Thai lemongrass chicken is the crêpes that hold it. Those who can't stay for the *churros*, served hot with a milkshake they call "frozen hot chocolate," can duck over to the newly verdant Christopher Street pier to pick up some brownies and homemade cinnamon ice cream from the Lunchbox ice-cream cart. (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées $15-$20.)

—*Liesl Schillinger*

NATHAN AND THE ZYDECO CHA CHAS

The accordionist Nathan Williams named his group for a song by the late zydeco monarch Clifton Chenier, but Williams is no nostalgic traditionalist. His band mixes R. & B. influences into its musical stew (they once recorded a French version of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely"), and the result is some of the best dance music around. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597. Sept. 7 at 7:30.)

CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

The torchbearers of hippie idealism may be grayer and wider now that they are in their fifth decade, but their three-part harmonies remain as angelic as ever. (Jones Beach Theatre. 212-307-7171. Sept. 7 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—The **Shins** sprang fully formed from Albuquerque with a curiously visceral form of guitar pop. The highlight of their 2001 full-length début, the single titled "New Slang," with its mournful background humming, is a perfect late-summer-afternoon song, a little wistful and a little ominous. The band stops by Sept. 2-4 with songs from their sophomore album, "Chutes to Narrow," to be released next month. Sept. 5: The local alternative-country singer and radio d.j. **Laura Cantrell**, fresh from her Grand Ole Opry début. With **Nina Nastasia**, a singer-songwriter with a dark sensibility and a voice that's the very sound of abandonment. On her latest album, "Run to Ruin," a cello, an accordion, and an acoustic bass help create a march-to-the-gallows atmosphere as she slowly limns sparse tales of tattered lives. Sept. 8-9: The **Raveonettes**. Having recorded the entirety of "Whip It On," their début EP of noirish, punky pop, in the key of B-flat minor (resulting in a compelling, if eventually repetitive, torrent of noise), this stylish Danish duo altered their approach just slightly for their first full-length album, "Chain Gang of Love," which shows that they have developed a handy grasp of the key of B major.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Sept. 5: Famously jilted by Angelina Jolie, the lauded actor turned largely ignored country singer **Billy Bob Thornton** channels his grief into a second album, "The Edge of the World." Sept. 6: Though most notorious for their impenetrably dour, dissonant sheets of guitar tumult and lengthy, cheerless instrumental dirges, the Scottish post-rock guerrillas **Mogwai** are back with songs from their latest album, "Happy Songs for Happy People," a title that is only slightly ironic, given the band's newfound appreciation for subtlety and space over violent blasts.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Sept. 3: Though **Scout Niblett's** high, keening voice and slightly mournful songs draw immediate comparisons to the shy singer Cat Power, Niblett seems happy to be the focus of attention. Often, she tours solo, bouncing from guitar to rudimentary drums as if attempting to fill the requirements of a one-woman band. With **Matt Pond P.A.** and others. Sept. 5: Having served time in two of the most influential bands to rise from the eighties (as bass player for both the endearingly shambolic Replacements and a troubled, latter-period incarnation of Guns N' Roses), **Tommy Stinson** has a résumé that speaks of wild extremes. With both bands' futures in question (rumors of a Replacements reunion are in constant rotation, and Axl Rose's master plan for G. N' R. seems to be in a state of perpetual flux), Stinson has taken to playing on his own. With the **Figgs**.

MAXWELL'S

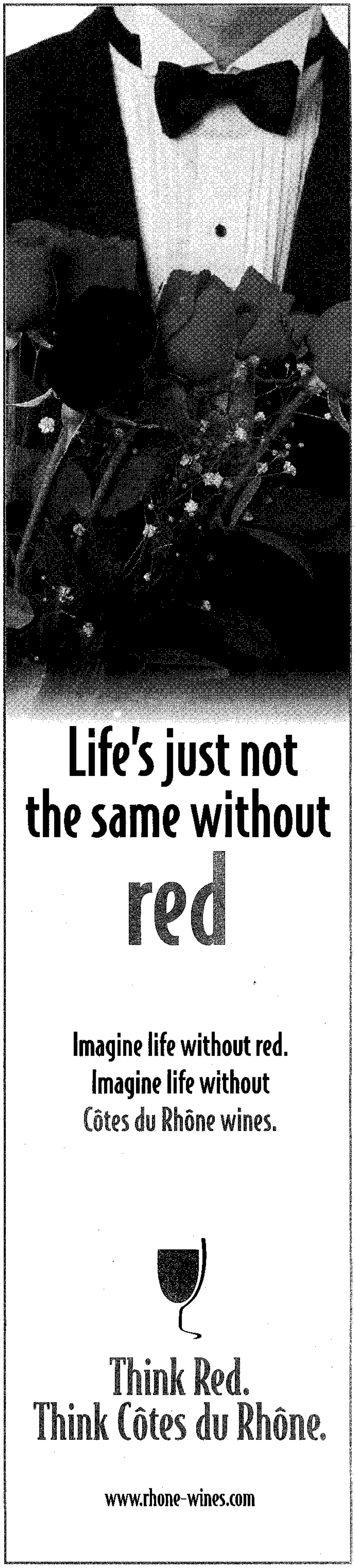
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—Sept. 7: Thanks to the plaintive growl of the lead vocalist, Hamilton Leithauser, the velveteen lushness of the organist, Walter Martin, and a stylishly dishevelled production aesthetic, the **Walkmen** have already eclipsed the buzz of their core members' previous outfit, Jonathan Fire*Eater.

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Sept. 3: The **Kills**, another girl-boy backyard-rock band, don't break any new ground, but they're less obsessed with purity than their blues-loving colleagues, and they're engagingly sloppy. With the organ-driven rock of the **Whirlwind Heat**. Sept. 5: The **Dictators**, one of the cornerstones of American punk.

WARSAW

261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Sept. 7: **Mogwai** (see Irving Plaza).



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JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Starting Sept. 2: They love the vocalist **Stacey Kent** in Britain, and now American fans of high-end jazz singing are beginning to warm to her distinctly nasal utterances. Kent's latest album, "The Boy Next Door," exhibits her unerring taste in classic material and understandable rapport with the saxophonist **Jim Tomlinson**, her husband. Dining.

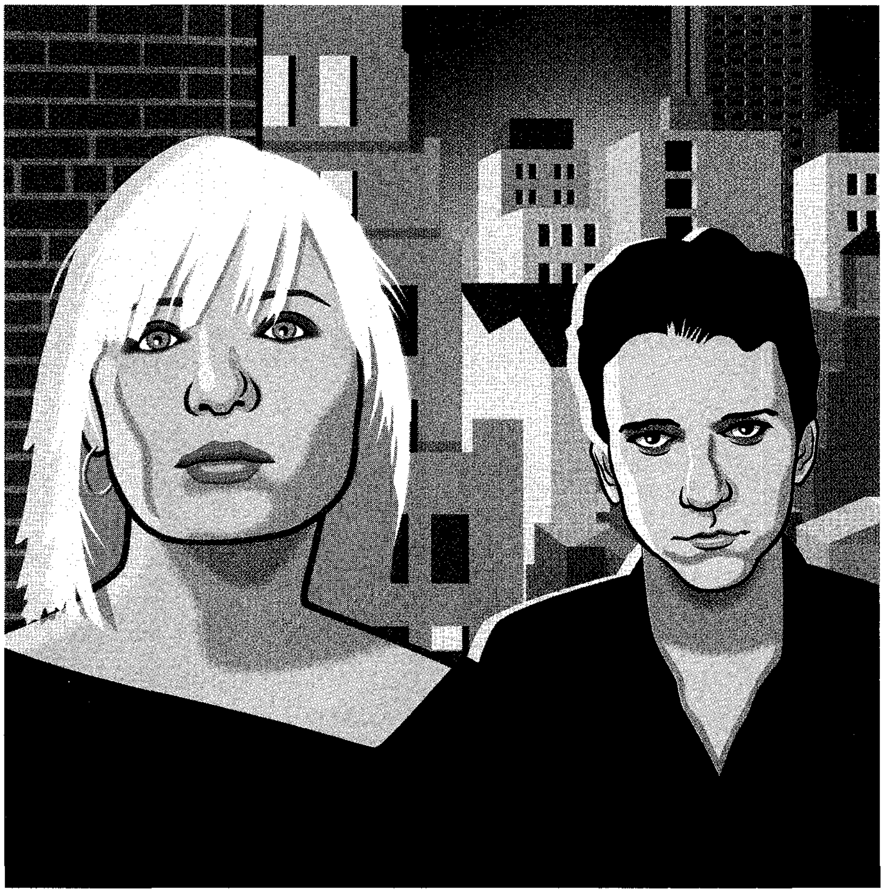
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Sept. 5-6: Though Latin jazz is all the rage again, let's not forget that the master *conguero* **Poncho Sanchez** and his steaming Latin Jazz Ensemble held the torch high during the leaner years. His new album, "Out of Sight," touches on James Brown and Ray Charles, buffing up the Latin-soul connection.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Sept. 3-6: No one asked **Kurt Elling** to add original lyrics to key compositions by Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawinul, Pat Metheny, and, dare we even say it, John Coltrane, as he does on "Man in the Air," but that hasn't stopped this fearless and fulsome vocalist from diving right in. A risk taker with a literate streak as wide as Lake Michigan, this Windy City stylist has positioned himself as the thinking man's jazz singer. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Sept. 7: Composing the long-form opus "Gillespiana" for Dizzy Gillespie back in the early sixties bought the Argentinean pianist and composer **Lalo Schifrin** a place in the jazz-history books; composing the 1966 theme song for the television show and subsequent Tom Cruise vehicle "Mission: Impossible" bought Schifrin just about anything he wanted. A plush rhythm section including the bassist **Ron Carter** and the drummer **Lewis Nash** joins Schifrin for this engagement.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Sept. 2-4: The singer and guitarist **Kenny Rankin** has successfully reinvented himself as a gifted stylist, equally at home with both classic and pop standards. Sept. 5-7: A one-hit wonder she may be, but **Maria** ("Midnight at the Oasis") **Muldaur** was a flavorful singer before that 1973 hit, and she has continued to refine her vocal talents ever since. Here, paying tribute to Peggy Lee, as she also does on her recent release, "A Woman Alone with the Blues," Muldaur is sure to display a sensuous sound, pleasingly cool yet loaded with heart. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Through Sept. 7: The **Bill Charlap** trio is about as good as mainstream-piano jazz gets these days. Working with the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington**, the thirtysomething Charlap displays the poise and taste, and increasingly, the inner depth, of such grand stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan. Like those masters, Charlap is also a superior accompanist; to prove it he's having nightly guests, including the guitarist **Peter Bernstein** (on the 4th), the alto saxophonist **Phil Woods** (the 5th), and the tenor saxophonist **Houston Person** (the 6th).



The Danish rock duo the Raveonettes, at Bowery Ballroom.

MICHAEL WELDON

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—Sept. 3: You've heard **Jenny Scheinman's** violin on Norah Jones's hit record, "Come Away with Me," but this ambitious composer and performer bites off a bigger chunk of the world's music when she's on her own. Her mix of jazz, klezmer, classical, and myriad downtown influences is sure to be well served by a band that includes the keyboardist **Myra Melford** and the trumpeter **Russ Johnson.**

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Sept. 5-6: **Tom Harrell** will be getting the royal treatment on his upcoming album, "Wise Children," which finds the trumpeter accompanied by such guest vocalists as Cassandra Wilson and Jane Monheit. If this neighborhood gig is more modest in scope, you can still expect plenty of Harrell's darkly lyrical playing and lively interplay with his seasoned quintet.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Even perennial bad boys age. **John Zorn,** the man to be counted on to jolt the new-music/new-jazz scene for the past quarter century, is turning fifty. It would take a full month just to skim the small universe of musical projects that this peripatetic composer and saxophonist has initiated, and that's just what Tonic is giving him. The multitude of Zorn's passions and obsessions—the Semitic strains of Masada (in all its evolving guises); his improvisational game playing; duets with Derek Bailey, Suzie Iberra, and Fred Frith; string-quartet recitals; and much more—will be touched on throughout September. Call the club for details.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Sept. 7: A band that has never really received its due, the **Paul Motian, Bill Frisell,** and **Joe Lovano** trio makes as unique a group sound as is heard in jazz these days. Motian's melodic drums, Frisell's lyrical and spare guitar lines, and Lovano's earthy saxophone make knotty abstract music that can shift seamlessly into romantic impressionism. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—On May 16, 1703, the six-foot-eight-inch tsar Peter the Great stood in a swamp beside the Neva River and proclaimed it the site for a new city that would take his name and earn the sobriquet "the Venice of the North." For **"Celebrating St. Petersburg,"** the Met raided its collection to mark the tricentennial of imperial Russia's capital city, and the small exhibition is a dazzler, stuffed with German silver, Sèvres porcelain, and snuffboxes encrusted with gold, enamel, ivory, and jewels from the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), an era aptly dubbed the "Age of Diamonds." Through Jan. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Ansel Adams at 100"** is a retrospective of the mountain man, whose exquisitely made, self-conscious photographs of spectacular Western scenery are a hard case in modern art. In form, Adams was impeccably modernist, and he had a command of photographic aesthetics as thoroughgoing, within its narrower range, as Edward Weston's. In feeling, Adams was a populist romantic, retreading sentimental conventions of God's country. To enjoy his imperious mastery and his swooning piety equally does not seem possible; they trip each other up. And the hanging of the smallish prints in the warehouse space of MOMA QNS is a blunder—the show looks dwarfed and dismal. Through Nov. 3. ♦ This succinct retrospective tests Max Beckmann's long-pending claim to parity with the modern masters of Paris. The curator Robert Storr's trenchant selection and airy hanging make a winning case. How does one look at art that is laden with elusive, often quite lugubrious portent? The show's answer: as painting. Beckmann's manipulations of aggressive, theatrical space are dazzlingly supple. The trick, for the viewer, is to receive the pictures passively, letting their organization declare itself. Even, or especially, when its imagery is gnarled and bizarre, a great Beckmann attains startling unity, notably through making light-dark modelling inseparable from warm-cool color. Depth and surface become one. Beckmann does all the work: our role is to be bowled over. Through Sept. 29. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

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"Naples, 1994," by Philip-Lorca diCorcia, at Pace Wildenstein (see Photography).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"From Picasso to Pollock"** revives a tried-and-true Guggenheim custom: installing highlights from the permanent collection for the summer months. The result is a satisfying, albeit familiar parade of modernist styles and masterworks, from Miró and Brancusi down at ground level to de Kooning, Rothko, et al. up in the empyrean. Along the way, the show digresses, like a helplessly enthusiastic collector, to offer a mini-retrospective of watercolors by Wassily Kandinsky. The show ranges from his early scrambled seascapes to late biomorphic abstractions, neatly encapsulating a great, eccentric career. To visitors from Chelsea, Kandinsky's trippy, spin-cycle compositions may suggest links to contemporary talents like Julie Mehretu and Steve Di Benedetto. Through Sept. 28. ♦ **"Kazimir Malevich: Suprematism"** is a concise, bewitching show of paintings, drawings, and sculptures—many of them making their first trip outside Russia. Through Sept. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—We've seen a lot of him lately, but **"Ellsworth Kelly: Red Green Blue"** is the kind of spare, smart show that can perk up even satiated appetites. Organized by Toby Kamps at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the exhibition focusses on a group of eight large paintings made between 1958 and 1965. The continuity of color choices (it's the same red, the same green, the same blue every time) puts the focus on simple changes in scale and shape, and offers a kind of Rothko Chapel-like immersion in Kelly's elemental hedonism. There are a few rooms of supplementary material—sketches, prints, and a new canvas in the same palette—but at its heart, the show really boils down to just two rooms, three colors, and one sleek vibe. Through Nov. 2. ♦ In **"The American Effect,"** forty-seven artists and filmmakers react to the myths and policies of the United States. Through Oct. 12. ♦ For sheer joy in materials, no one can compete with Sarah Sze. Binder clips, bright-blue Windex bottles, fake grass, PVC pipe, drinking straws, orange string—put it all together in the Whitney's moatlike sunken courtyard and you've got **"The Triple Point of Water."** This refers to the solid, liquid, and gaseous states of H_2O, and it's an ethereal title, but the elaborate installation is a marvel, a delicate, multilevel habitat, a miniature city or ecosystem animated by little fans and burbling aquariums. Through Oct. 9. ♦ Louise Bourgeois did most of the two hundred and twenty pen and pencil drawings in **"The Insomnia Drawings"** between November, 1994, and June, 1995, during a prolonged stretch of sleeplessness. The work, she says, is "a kind of rocking or stroking and an attempt to find a kind of peace. Like rocking a baby to sleep." Casting her own psyche as a fretful and voracious infant is vintage Bourgeois strategy, and the drawings—mostly in red ballpoint, with an emphasis on circles, spirals, looming buildings, and abstracted visages—are as twitchy and hallucinatory as you might fear. Through Sept. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—Corporate lobbies don't generally conjure hippie communes. Katy Grinnan has managed the trick with a freewheeling installation that sprouts corn, peppers, and tomatoes growing in plastic buckets of soil. The ambitious show suggests early Jason Rhoades or a 4-H version of Sarah Sze with its eclectic sprawl of everyday materials (aside from the vegetable elements, there are aluminum beams, grow lights, and a plastic bench). Some aspects make use of the building's existing greenery: a brightly patterned mobile dangling from the ceiling (Calder by way of Ken Kesey) seems to have shed layers into the treetops below. Through Jan. 4. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—Some notes on chocolate: to make a bar of dark chocolate, you need about twenty cacao seeds—a princely sum in the Aztec markets of pre-Columbian Mexico, where *caçahuatl* had been consumed since 600 B.C. A rain-forest midge no bigger than a capital letter on this page pollinates the cacao tree. Sugar was not added to chocolate until Spanish conquistadores imported it to Europe, and nearly all the chocolate produced in the U.S. during the Second World War was reserved for military use. Want more? The **"Chocolate"** show illustrates a cornucopia of ecological, technological, and cultural facts about the essential indulgence, with interactive exhibits, artifacts, and, best of all, free samples on the weekend. Through Sept. 7. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—Baseball produces relics as readily as statistics, and the refreshing art in the American Folk Art Museum's **"The Perfect Game: America Looks at Baseball"** includes penny-arcade sluggers, player portraits embroidered by a game-deprived convict from sock and shoelace threads, several balls decorated with India ink by a multitalented umpire, frieze work from the original Yankee Stadium, a mysterious Mets logo fashioned by a Cuna Indian seamstress in Panama, an enamel-on-tin image of Jackie Robinson stealing home, and photographs of the shining but evanescent Bosox patterns mowed onto the Fenway Park outfield grass by groundskeeper David R. Mellor, a Cézanne of this new genre. Cooperstown, take note. Through Feb. 1. ♦ For the last ten years of the nineteenth century, Fritz Vogt, a German immigrant who died on New Year's Day in 1900, roamed New York's Mohawk Valley drawing architectural portraits on commission—houses, farms, a cheese factory. Vogt got off to a timid start doing straightforward early portraits of churches in graphite—there are a few included in the show's twenty-six selections—but soon began to hit his stride, incorporating colored pencil and an idiosyncratic flattened perspective that reveals three sides of a building at once. The artist re-

portedly shunned offers of lodging, preferring to bunk on bales of hay, and his tidy world of clapboard, shutter, and fence is eerily exterior. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Smart Wrap"** may sound like the latest sandwich craze, but in fact it's a revolutionary new building material developed by the architects Stephen Kieran and James Timberlake. The thin skin of printable plastic will collect solar energy, change color with the climate, and display information by means of the same technology used in cell phones or P.D.A.s. A nonfunctional prototype of the material is on view now, wrapped around a pavilion in the museum's garden. It sports fake solar cells and a bland, corporate-décor pattern of black, yellow, gray, and turquoise that gives it an uncanny resemblance to a giant shower curtain. Through Oct. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays, 10 to 6; Fridays, 10 to 9; and Sundays, noon to 5.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Willem van Tetrode: Bronze Sculptures of the Renaissance."** When the Dutch sculptor van Tetrode (circa 1525-1580) went to Italy, he studied with Benvenuto Cellini and plied his trade by casting small but heroic bronzes after classical masterworks such as the Apollo Belvedere and the Medici Venus. He returned to Delft in 1567 and initiated a craze for such statuettes, some forty of which are now on view, predominantly brawny Herculeses and miniature Mercurys. Tetrode's emphasis on torqued musculature earned him comparison to Michelangelo, and his influence on younger compatriots such as Hendrick Goltzius makes this show a pendant to the Met's exhibition of Goltzius's paintings, prints, and drawings. Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Friday evenings until 9; and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-534-1672)—**"Roaring Into the Twenties: The *New* New York Woman"** looks at the emancipated woman of the Jazz Age. The show nods to political advances—particularly suffrage and employment outside the home—but spends more time with fashion, offering a dazzling array of the beaded sheaths, silk stockings, and gauzy underthings that announced the particular freedoms of the era. The real progress seems to have been in brassieres, and there are several on show. Through Sept. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (212-219-1222)—The Venezuelan artist José Antonio Hernández-Diez makes sly social commentaries his stock in trade (in one photograph, the logos on a stack of pricey athletic shoes spell out M-A-R-X). His less than traditional sculptural materials include baseball bats and pork bellies transformed into skateboards with the addition of wheels. In one work, a dead dog, housed in a Plexiglas box, alludes to obscure religious reliquaries devoted to a martyred greyhound worshipped as a saint by medieval peasants (but never canonized by the Catholic Church). Hernández-Diez clearly intends to raise complex issues of class (he substitutes a rangy mutt for the sleek canine of legend, for instance), but in his quest for a punch line he risks trading eloquence for superficiality. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (212-873-3400)—**"Petropolis,"** an exhibition that's billed as "a social history of urban people and their animal companions," begins with a pet rock and an electronic key-chain pet, then makes a detour to squirrels (apparently, at one point, New York children kept them as pets). But the heart of the matter is dogs. A photograph of Marie Antoinette's gilded velvet kennel suggests comparisons with the couches currently being upholstered in Europe for today's pampered canines, some examples of which are on display. More modern developments include dog magazines, dog runs, and, of course, pooper-scoopers. Photographs of dogs (game, adorable, full of character) abound, all suggesting why they occupy first place in citified hearts. Through Nov. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (718-592-9700)—Salvador Dali was one of several Surrealists being considered for a pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair when his window designs for Bonwit Teller started a scandal that put him in jail. Aided by his new status as a headline-grabber, he promptly got his pavilion and began designing the "Dream of Venus," whose creation and glory days are documented here. Early proposals for a "nightmare corridor" with pneumatic walls and rocking floors gave way to a Freudian fantasy staffed with full-time mermaids, housed in a Gaudí-like molded-plaster building whose columns were supported by high heels. Dali's use of female models—nude but for lobster loincloths—has inspired the museum to post an informal PG rating, but the original installation and performances were censored just before the opening and Dali rebelled, flying over Queens air-dropping leaflets declaring his artistic independence. Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"The Panorama of the City of New York,"** an ongoing exhibition of the 9,335-square-foot model of the five boroughs, is now almost forty years old; like the whale at the Museum of Natural History, it's surprisingly powerful on followup visits. The pet project of Robert Moses was to have been an urban-planning tool as well as an attraction at the 1964 World's Fair. Ongoing renovations have brought in hundreds of new buildings (there are now more than eight hundred thousand in all). Certain architectural features fluoresce under black light in a slow strobe of dusks and dawns, a new day every fifteen minutes. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5. Call for summer hours.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—At the top of the stairs, at the entrance to **"Hands On Hands Down,"** a bright-red yarn sculpture by Louis Cameron, a minimalist web that's part Fred Sandback and part Spider-Man, alerts viewers that the museum's three artists-in-residence are into handmade craft and popular culture. Mickalene Thomas embeds canvases with thousands of rhinestones, producing haute-kitsch imagery (pinups, panthers) that allude to Pointillism, the all-over patterns of Pollock, and black-velvet paintings in one sparkly swoop. Deborah Grant also goes for all-over coverage, in riotous paintings that combine comic books and social commentary as she cuts panels into iconic shapes—Mickey Mouse, the Chanel logo, an Oscar statuette—then covers every inch with black-and-white cartoons. Through Sept. 28. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

JEREMY BLAKE
Spend an hour watching the world go by in Times Square and you will probably have absorbed as much visual stimulus as you can manage. But save sixty seconds of attention for the last minute of each hour, when Jeremy Blake's digital video appears on the NBC Panasonic Astrovision screen, at Forty-third and Broadway facing north. "Cowboy Waltz," which is sponsored by the public-art foundation Creative Time, turns the bluster of Broadway into hypnotic abstract cascades of shape and color. The seconds click down; a batlike blue-gray form morphs and flutters, then dwindles to a red dot, as if film were burning out in a projector. Then it's gone till next time. Note: No showings at 7:59 A.M., 8:59 A.M., or 6:59 P.M. Through Sept. 30. (Presented by Creative Time. 212-206-6674.)

JOHN FUNT
Landscape paintings in a limited palette of rural Connecticut. Opens Sept. 4. (James Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-535-5767.)

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JENNIFER REEVES
The uptown portion of a two-part exhibition (the other section is being shown at the gallery's new space in Chelsea, at 532 W. 24th St.) includes paintings, works on paper, and assemblages, all of which often contain phrases from devotional texts, pop songs, or art criticism. Opens Sept. 6. (Galeria Ramis Barquet, 41 W. 57th St. 212-675-3421.)

RICHARD STANKIEWICZ
The father of junk art gets an abbreviated, overdue retrospective. After a stint in the Navy and study in Europe, Stankiewicz (1922-83) began welding rusty steel detritus—boiler tanks, manifolds, propellers, nails, you name it—into the intricate, wry configurations that made him one of the famous names of the fifties and sixties. Like David Smith and Mark di Suvero, Stankiewicz was a flamboyantly gifted sculptor; unlike them, he welcomed anthropomorphism, highlighting it with interpretive titles like "Urchin," "Family Portrait," and "Middle-Aged Couple." The results make for mixed pleasures: an amalgam of beauty and whimsy, Rust Belt solemnity and folk-art cutesiness. It's a pity that the show couldn't accommodate the large-scale works of the seventies and eighties, which might have given a fuller sense of his legacy. Through Sept. 25. (AXA, 787 Seventh Ave., at 51st St. 212-554-4818.)

"RECENT ACQUISITIONS"
This display, which is more a bazaar than a curated exhibition, nevertheless includes an impressive setting of gems—in the Expressionist category, woodcuts and lithographs by the great Käthe Kollwitz, a lovely little Schiele watercolor that looks like a Japanese print, and a searing, effortless crayon sketch by Klimt of a nude old woman. "Self-Taught Artists" presents not only Grandma Moses and Henry Darger but the weirdly precise Russian Nikifor Zaiatz, who illustrates "Examples of Appropriate and Inappropriate Dress" (tall boots and a hat with a little bell, respectively). Through Sept. 12. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 212-245-6734.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ELLEN BIRKENBLIT
Drawings and paintings on metal of animals and figures in a dreamlike private world. Opens Sept. 6. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

LEO DE GOEDE
Whorling large-scale abstractions that turn out to be magnified versions of paper that the artist has marbled. Opens Sept. 6. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474.)

RITA MC BRIDE
Three machinelike titanium sculptures and a series of awnings continue the artist's exploration of everyday objects and neglected aspects of architecture. Opens Sept. 4. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

JILL WEINSTOCK
Cast-rubber sculptures including one of men's striped shirts against light boxes and another of zippers cast in rubber. Opens Sept. 5. (Caren Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 212-727-8304.)

KEVIN ZUCKER
Two large paintings of the inside of a country house that are accompanied by smaller works, including still-lifes and architectural details. Opens Sept. 6. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

"IN FULL VIEW"
Back in the day, summer shows were the equivalent of a meal made from leftovers: the results could satisfy, but they were casually thrown together. This summer changed that with a glut of exceptional exhibitions, including this eloquent entry of thirty years' worth of art that flirts with invisibility. In the main gallery a Sol LeWitt wall drawing spans one wall in a whisper of graphite, adjacent to a Carl Andre floor piece made of glass rods. The only color is provided by Tom Friedman's dots, which creep up a corner as if to perforate it. Elsewhere, a vertical sliver of mirror by Olafur Eliasson and a pair of delicate chain webs by Jim Hodges vie for blink-and-you'll-miss-it status. Through Sept. 13. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

"OPEN: NEW DESIGNS FOR PUBLIC SPACE"
From Oslo to Melbourne, Bogota to Seoul, major cities across the world are erupting with innovative large-scale architectural projects. More than twenty of them—designed by reigning and rising stars like Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Will Alsop, and Craig Dykers—are presented in this lucid, dense installation, a sort of walk-through version of a book due to be published this fall. Couch potatoes may be tempted to wait for the latter, but impatient viewers will be rewarded with a range of architectural models, not to mention the pleasure of traipsing across the Van Alen Institute's barking, squeaking turquoise flooring. Through Oct. 31. (30 W. 22nd St. 212-924-7000.)

"REVEREND JEN'S LOWER EAST SIDE TROLL MUSEUM"
To celebrate Printed Matter's publication of the hilarious "Really Cool Neighborhood," a combination Lower East Side guide and anti-landlord musical, the Reverend Jen, an ordained minister and self-proclaimed "sex symbol for the insane" (the Rev does not go out in public without a pair of plastic elf ears) transforms the back room of the bookstore into a Mecca for troll lovers. Most of the room is devoted to an extensive collection of the garish-haired dolls (there's even a troll Barbie). The show also has paintings and works on paper that resemble line drawings in a coloring book, as well as previous publications including a self-published zine, *Beer Is Magic*. Through Sept. 6. (Printed Matter, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-925-0325.)

"SIMPLE MARKS"
How many ways can color touch down on a surface? The fourteen artists in this exemplary show offer a gamut of options, from Louise Fishman's kinked, fish-hooky brushstrokes to Louise Bourgeois's obsessive ballpoint coils. The differences are temperamental as much as graphic: Joe Fyfe's "A Sock Pulled Off" suggests a kind of ascetic reserve, as if the artist sat and mulled for days before picking up his brush. Otto Zitko, on the other hand, is all frenzied, disinhibited impulse. Making marks, for Zitko, seems to be a kind of electrical contact. Through Sept. 6. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

"TO DRAW A LINE"
Janine Antoni has created a room-size sculpture with two steel reels linked by a hemp rope over a bed of hemp. At the show's opening, she will walk the rope (she learned to tightrope-walk for the piece) and remain on it until she falls into the hempen bed. Several other works on the theme of balance and falling are included in the show. Opens Sept. 6. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

"TODAY'S MAN"
In a clever inversion of the dictum "Bigger is better," the gallery installs more than fifty small-scale works by and about men. Portraiture dominates, from a gem of an Alex Katz canvas, from 1985, of three nattily dressed friends to Richard Phillips's black-and-silver drawing of the rapper Curtis Jackson (he looks like a surly extra from "Pirates of the Caribbean"). The only intimation that size matters is a sculpture in the center of the gallery, a bronze bust by Marco Boggia Sella depicting a man with the kind of nose they used to call strong. Through Sept. 13. (John Connelly Presents, 526 W. 26th St. 212-337-9563.)

GALLERIES—SOHO

STAN BRODSKY
Colored abstractions based on journeys through coastal California and the South of France. Through Sept. 30. (June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 212-226-1660.)

ELE D'ARTAGNAN
Brightly colored works in the naïve-art style, filled with sensual private symbolism. Opens Sept. 4. (KS Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.)

"THE BURBS"
Is there a pictorial equivalent to John Cheever? As celebrants of suburbia's leafy ennui, Fairfield Porter and Edward Hopper come pretty close, and it's no surprise to find them represented (both by small knockout drawings) in this thoughtful group show. Eric Fischl, Mark Tansey, and David Hockney put in appearances as well, but the real focus is on younger painters like Thomas Woodruff and David Humphrey, who see suburbia not as a real place but as a theatrical setting, a foil for intricate, Mannerist-Surrealist daydreams. Through Sept. 6. (DFN, 176 Franklin St. 212-334-3400.)

"KNOCKABOUT"
In "Tide Paranoia," a bright-orange bottle of laundry detergent rotates discreetly near the gallery ceiling, where you might expect to find a security camera. This work, by Mathieu Mercier, is just one of the casual visual pranks in this whimsical group show. Oli Watt covers a schoolroom desk with a colorful mosaic of chewed gum (it looks like a slapdash Tom Friedman), while a video by Scott Wolniak puts a new twist on Action painting, as the artist tries to render an industrial landscape from the back of a speeding flatbed truck. Through Sept. 13. (Spencer Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 212-334-3455.)

GALLERIES—THE BRONX

PATRICIA CRONIN
The genteel, well-tended lanes of Woodlawn Cemetery, lined with Greek Revival family mausoleums, don't see much new construction. So when the sculptor Patricia Cronin, under the auspices of Deitch Projects, pulled up to the corner of Prospect and Walnut Avenues with a marble sculpture of herself in bed with her partner, the painter Deborah Kass, her monument to the living stood out. The machine-carved, hand-finished work, patterned after nineteenth-century memorial statuary, shows Cronin on her back with Kass at her side. Their curls mingle on a single crooked pillow, and their legs nestle under a softly draping sheet, which doesn't keep fall leaves from collecting at their sides, or prevent a birdbath-like puddle from forming in the central hollow at their hipbones. Through eternity. (Webster Ave. at 233rd St. 718-920-0500.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA
A mini-retrospective that coincides with the publication of "A Storybook Life," a collection of twenty-five years' worth of the influential artist's most personal work. The show opens with a portly man asleep in bed, surrounded by a sad-faced woman on the television screen, a Teddy bear, and a half-full glass of wine. It closes with the same man in an open casket, surrounded by thousands of flowers in a pink-tinged funeral home. Although diCorcia used his family in many of his staged photographs, the narrative is illusory, more dreamlike than autobiographic. DiCorcia's images can be unsettling (babies cry alone, people appear ill), poignant, or even funny. It might not be diCorcia's own Pinto that has been left overnight atop a hydraulic lift, or his child who is playing next to a forest fire, or his grandmother who has decided to walk away from her wheelchair, but this master of pinpoint lighting and of cinematic detail certainly tells a compelling story. Opens Sept. 4. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

MILTON ROGOVIN
Now ninety-three, Rogovin was labelled "Buffalo's Top Red" by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1958, after he had organized the city's optometrists' union. He subsequently lost his practice, picked up a camera, and began to photograph local storefront churches. In the early seventies, he began the project for which he'll be remembered, several thousand portraits of the residents of Buffalo's Lower West Side, at the time a neighborhood of struggling African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Indian immigrants. Evoking the work of Walker Evans or Shelby Lee Adams, Rogovin captured the stoic pride evident on young parents' faces and the unbridled joy on the dance floor at the end of a long week spent in a steel mill. Unlike many social documentarians, Rogovin returned to rephotograph his subjects, in the eighties, in the nineties, and two years ago. The results of this work, sets of

four pictures shown with an accompanying interview, have a palpable sense of lost time and the inevitability of growing old. Through Oct. 12. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 212-873-3400.)

"THE FIRST DECADE"
Celebrating the tenth anniversary of this unique gallery's contribution to the growing appreciation of Latin-American photographers, this grab bag of a show pits nineteenth-century shots of pyramids against images taken in the last few years by Graciela Iturbide and Luis Gonzales Peña. Edward Weston, Tina Modotti, and Manuel Alvarez Bravo are represented by signature pictures, as are lesser-known young photographers like Gerardo Suter and Christian Cravo, who tread in the heady mix of Latin-American religious iconography and social inequity that creates such indelible images. Through Sept. 6. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.)

Short List

TOMOKO SAWADA
Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.
Through Sept. 6.

"THE BOYS OF SUMMER"
ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.
Through Sept. 6.

The ins and outs of chocolate at the American Museum of Natural History.

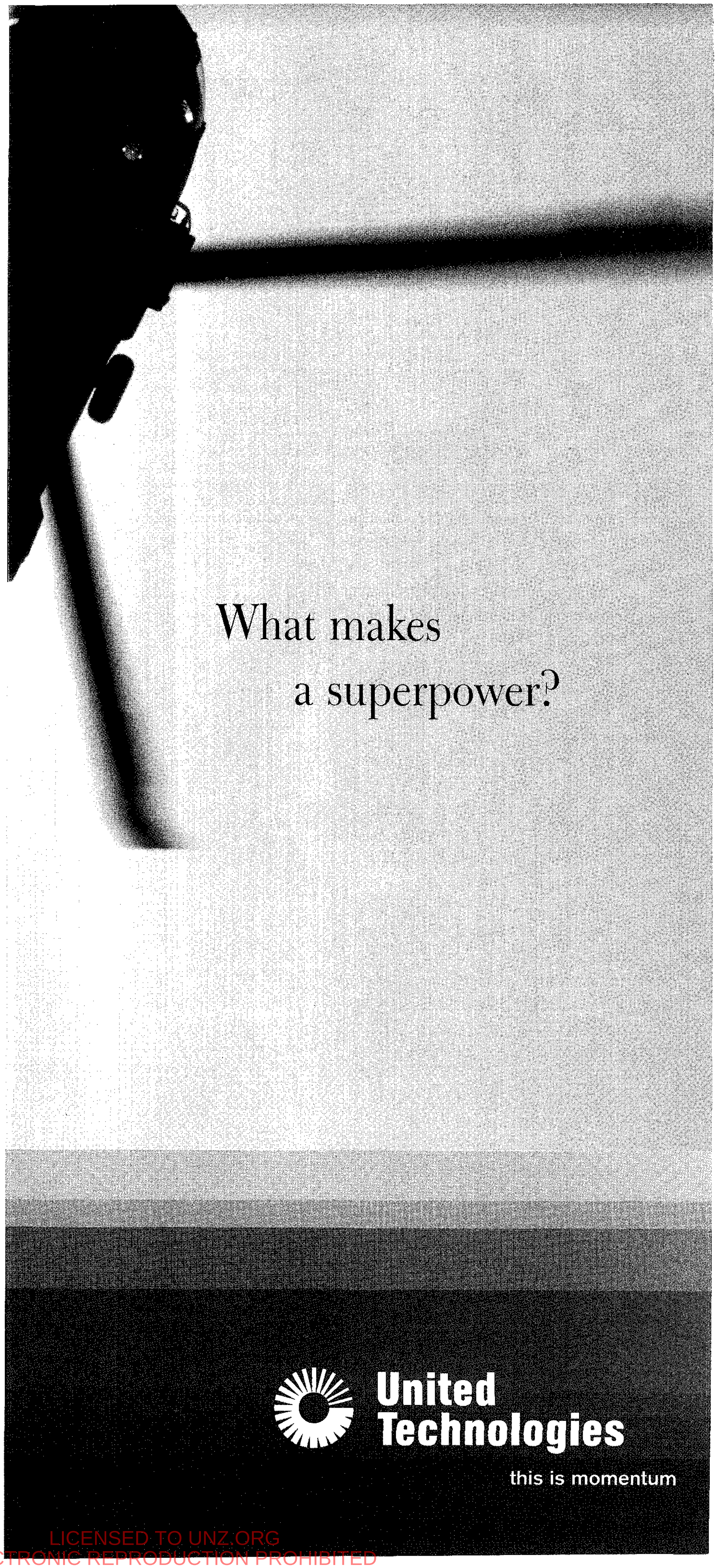
SERGIO RUZZIER

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 3 at 10 A.M. and 2 and Sept. 4 at 10 A.M.: The monthly House Sale, a range of furniture, art works, and decorative items offered at moderate prices. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

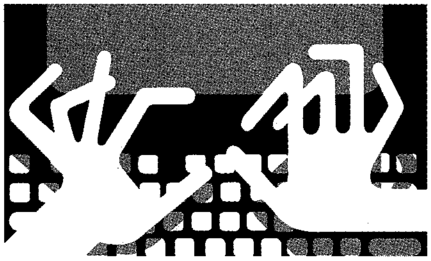
NEW YORK CITY OPERA
City Opera, which presented the New York stage première of **"Alcina"**—one of the gems of the Handelian repertory—back in 1983, offers the first big event of the fall season, a new production of the work by Francesca Zambello. Christine Goerke, a sparkling soprano and skilled actress who shone brightly in this summer's Glimmerglass Opera production of Handel's "Orlando," sings the title role, heading a cast that also includes Lauren Skuce, Katharine Goeldner, Jennifer Dudley, Keith Jameson, and Joshua Winograde (a début); Daniel Beckwith conducts. (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570. Sept. 9 at 6:30.)



BOOK CURRENTS

On the Dot

The rise of the information age looked like a revolution partly because it created an élite from the previously unheralded ranks of programmers and gamers.



Shawn Fanning, who spent part of his childhood in the welfare system and part in a foster home before inventing the file-sharing software Napster as a Northeastern University undergraduate, is the unlikely hero of Joseph Menn's **ALL THE RAVE: THE RISE AND FALL OF SHAWN FANNING'S NAPSTER** (Crown). Menn's Fanning, bright and soft-spoken, displays admirable loyalty to those who supported him early on, and sometimes too much loyalty—his uncle John, a surrogate father who gave him his first computer, managed to grab a seventy-per-cent stake in the company and foiled any possible settlement with the record industry.

John Romero, one of the minds behind the popular combat video games Doom and Quake, was also shaped by an early experience with a father figure: when he was eleven, his stepfather discovered him at a pizza parlor playing video games and smashed his face into the machine. According to David Kushner's **MASTERS OF DOOM: HOW TWO GUYS CREATED AN EMPIRE AND TRANSFORMED POP CULTURE** (Random House), Romero first exorcised his demons in comic books that featured a boy being punished in gruesome ways by his father, then put the same themes to use in the games he created with his partner, John Carmack. After Doom's success, Romero and Carmack's relationship degenerated into a vicious feud—or, in gamer terms, a "deathmatch." Romero lost but walked away with a tidy fortune and found love with a *Playboy* model-cum-gamer who used her salary from Romero's new company to get breast implants.

—*Kate Taylor*

CONCERTS IN TOWN

COLLEGIUM REGALE
The well-scrubbed gentlemen scholars of King's College Choir, Cambridge—countertenors, tenors, and basses—leave the little-boy trebles behind and offer a concert on their own. Their mostly a-cappella repertory, which hardly changes through the years, includes not only the classic sacred works of the British repertory (from the Renaissance to the twentieth century) but also madrigals, folk songs, and their own close-harmony specials (which tend to sound somewhere between Noël Coward and Monty Norman). (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 51st St. 212-378-0248. Sept. 3 at 7:30.)

"MADE IN THE U.S.A.": MANHATTAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Richard Auldon Clark conducts MacDowell's "Indian" Suite and Copland's "Lincoln Portrait" (with the willowy Judy Collins, an unconventional choice, narrating). (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 4 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

MIDTOWN CONCERTS: LORETTA O'SULLIVAN
The early-music cellist plays a solo recital of Bach, Biber, and Domenico Gabrielli, the instrument's first great virtuoso and the composer of its first solo works. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Sept. 4 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.)

BARGEMUSIC
The guitarist Simon Wynberg is the floating chamber-music series' special guest this weekend; music by Paganini—who wrote as dashingly for the guitar as he did for his first love, the violin—is prominent. Sept. 4-5 at 7:30: Two works by Paganini (including the Grand Duo in A Major) head a program of Falla, Sarasate, Giuliani, and Gerhard, with Wynberg joined by the violinist Mark Peskanov. ♦ Sept. 6 at 7:30 and Sept. 7 at 4: Wynberg teams up with Peskanov, the flutist Lorna McGhee, and other musicians for quartets for guitar and strings by Haydn and Paganini in addition to Mozart's Flute Quartet No. 1 in D Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

"BUENOS AYRES: TANGOS FROM HEAVEN AND HELL"
Dancers from the musical "Forever Tango" join the Zvi Migdal Tango Ensemble (which inflects the traditional tango sound with jazz harmonies and classical-performance precision) in a series of multimedia vignettes that showcase the history of the most seductive of dances; the richly varied lyrics (by such writers as Borges and Cortazar) encompass such themes as immigration, tyranny, and soccer, as well as the fatalistic eroticism that first made the world go tango-mad. (Proshansky Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 212-817-8215. Sept. 4-5 at 8.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND
City Island's brunchtime chamber-music series goes Baroque with a program of J. C. Bach, Telemann, and Geminiani performed by the violinist Vita Wallace, the theorbo player Gary Hess, and other musicians. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. 212-724-4474. Sept. 7 at 12:30.)

MODO POLONICO: GUITAR MUSIC BY ALEKSANDER TANSMAN
The Eldridge Street Project, which for the past decade has been sponsoring innovative Jewish-themed cultural events in the sun-filled nineteenth-century Eldridge Street Synagogue, hopes to spread the sounds of the largely unknown Polish-Jewish composer Aleksander Tansman. Tansman, who moved to Paris in 1919, befriended and was influenced by both Stravinsky and Ravel; another Parisian friendship, with a young Spanish musician named Andrés Segovia, would inspire many of Tansman's wonderful compositions for the guitar, which feature Impressionist harmonies matched to melodies and rhythms with strong Polish and Jewish flavors. Oren Fader, a talented modern-music specialist, will be the soloist, and the Queens College professor Arbie Orenstein, a distinguished musicologist who knew Tansman, will give a brief talk about the composer's life and work. (12 Eldridge St. 212-219-0888. Sept. 7 at 2.)

ROLF SCHULTE AND SOPHIE SHAO
Schulte, long one of New York's modern-music stalwarts, brings a fiery intensity to the music of Elliott Carter; this concert features the composer's "Four Lauds," for solo violin, one of which, "Remembering Roger" (a tip of the hat to the late Roger Sessions), is dedicated to Schulte. Shao offers "Lord Chesterfield to His Son," a piece by the composer-pianist Richard Wilson, who joins her in Beethoven's Sonata in A Major, Op. 69, and who partners Schulte in Mozart's Sonata in B-Flat Major, K. 454. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Sept. 7 at 3.)

CONCERTANTE
The vibrant young string ensemble begins its season at Merkin Concert Hall with an evening of Dohnányi, Mozart (the Grande Sestetto Concertante), and the New York première of Jeffery Cotton's Sextet for Strings (which began as an elegy for the victims of 9/11). (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Sept. 9 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

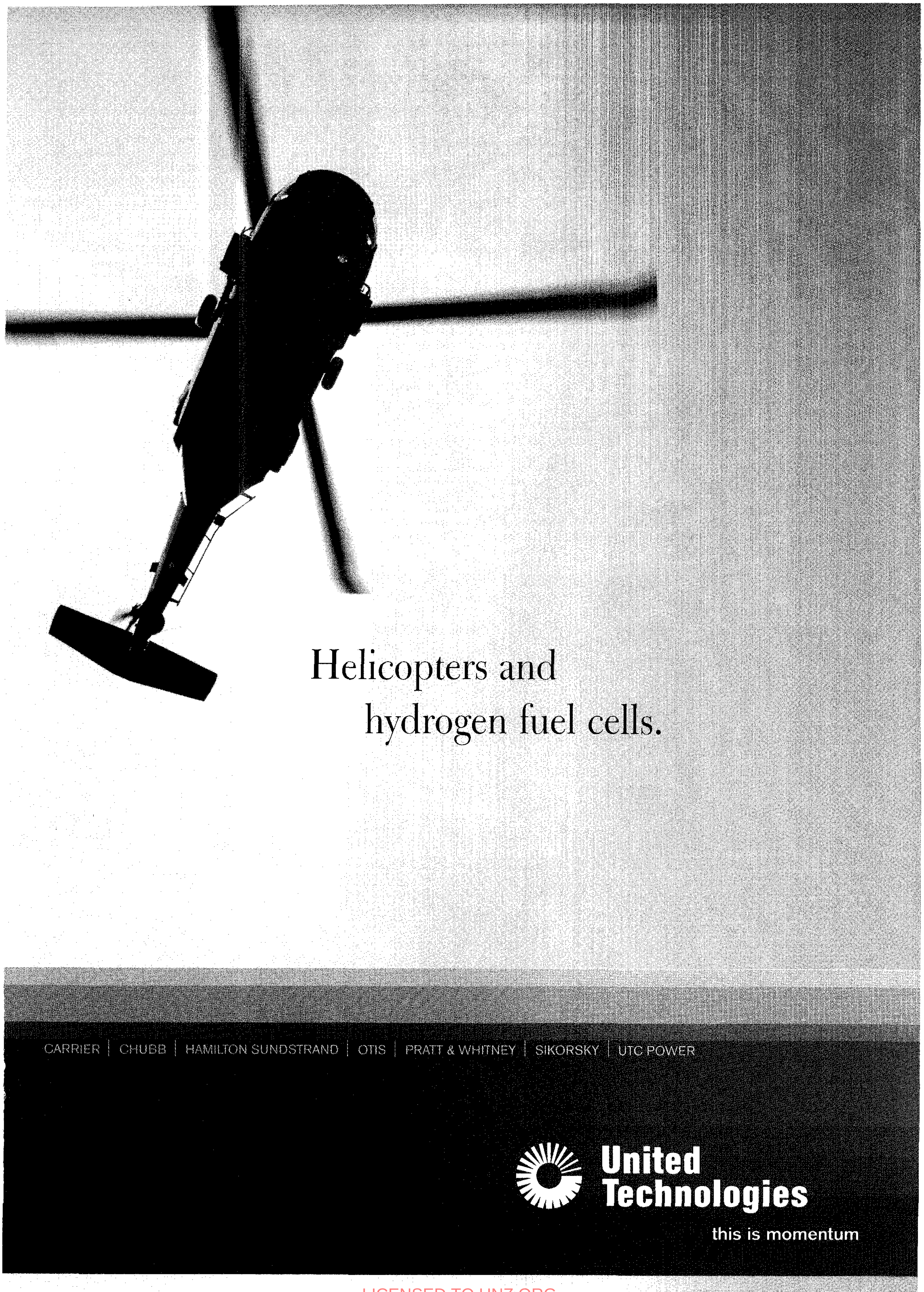
MAVERICK CONCERTS
America's oldest continuously running chamber-music series concludes its eighty-eighth season. Sept. 6 at 8: The Chicago cellist Christopher Costanza, who was recently invited to join the St. Lawrence String Quartet after an epic, nearly two-year search to replace their departing cellist, Marina Hoover, juxtaposes suites by Bach (Nos. 1 and 2) and Britten (No. 1) with a contemporary masterpiece for the instrument—Bright Sheng's "Seven Tunes Heard in China," incisive character sketches based on folk music he collected while in rural exile during the Cultural Revolution. ♦ Sept. 7 at 3: Ruth Laredo presents an all-Schubert program, featuring some of the great piano scores that came to light thanks to the investigative instincts of Robert Schumann (who discovered them in the attic of Schubert's brother) and the intercession of Felix Mendelssohn (who arranged to have them published). She performs the Impromptus in G-Flat Major and B-Flat Major and the Sonata in A Major (Op. Post. 120), along with a selection of waltzes and ländler. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Sept. 4 at 7: Nell Freudenberger offers selections from her début short-story collection, "Lucky Girls." (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 5 at 7: Paula Cohen reads from her novel, "Gramercy Park." (The Montauk Club, 25 Eighth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-638-0800.) ♦ Sept. 7 at 3: The novelists Yona Zeldis-McDonough, Matthew Sharpe, and Gary Shteyngart read from their work. (Sunny's, 253 Conover St. For more information, call 718-875-3677.) ♦ Sept. 8 at 7:30: Sophie Cabot Black, Michael Burkard, Fanny Howe, and other contributors to the poetry journal *Lyric* read from their work. (Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 5 Union Sq. W., seventh floor. For more information, call 212-691-6590.) ♦ Sept. 9 at 7: The spoken-word artist Taylor Mali celebrates the release of his new live album, "Conviction." (Bowery Poetry Club, 308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. For more information, call 212-614-1224.)

TALKS
Sept. 5 at 1:30: The curator W. Parker Hayes, Jr., gives an illustrated lecture on the rural scenes favored by the nineteenth-century artist Fritz G. Vogt. (American Folk Art Museum, 45 W. 53rd St. 212-265-1040.) ♦ Sept. 5 at 7: R. A. Scotti discusses "Sudden Sea," her account of the great unnamed hurricane that devastated New York and New England in 1938. (Melville Gallery, South Street Seaport, 213 Water St. For more information, call 212-748-8735.)

RICHARD MCGUIRE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MOVIES OPENING

CARNAGE
The début feature of the writer-director Delphine Gleize follows the various parts of an Andalusian bull and the effect they have on the lives of the Europeans who purchase them. With Chiara Mastroianni, Jacques Gamblin, and Angela Molina. In French and Spanish. Opening Sept. 5.

DICKIE ROBERTS: FORMER CHILD STAR
David Spade plays the titular hero, who asks a family to adopt him at the age of thirty-five so that he can have a normal childhood. Directed by Sam Weisman. Opening Sept. 5.

THE ORDER
A young priest (Heath Ledger) goes to Rome to investigate a series of unusual killings, where he uncovers a conspiracy aimed at the Vatican. Written and directed by Brian Helgeland. Opening Sept. 5.

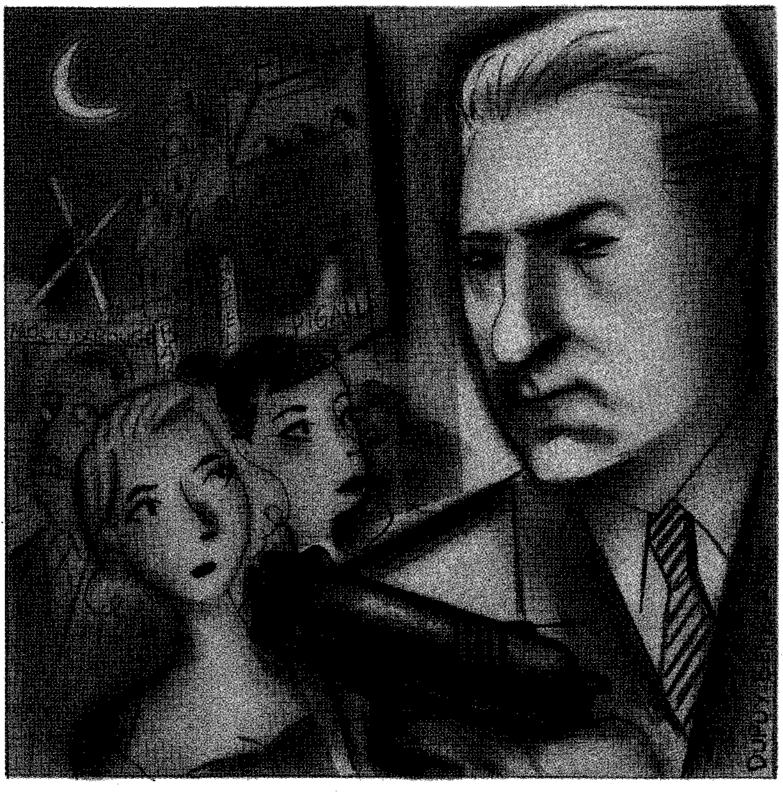
PARTY MONSTER
Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato directed this drama based on the life of Michael Alig (Macaulay Culkin), an early-nineties New York City club kid turned murderer. Seth Green plays Alig's best friend, James St. James. Also with Dylan McDermott and Chloë Sevigny. Opening Sept. 5.

TAKING SIDES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 5. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ZERO DAY
The début film of Ben Coccio tells the story, in the form of video diaries, of two teen-age boys, Andre and Cal, who are plotting an attack on their high school. Opening Sept. 3. (Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

AMERICAN SPLENDOR
Well, it's different. Robert Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman, directing together, have made a drama-documentary in which the drama and the documentary look at each other but don't touch. The movie is about Harvey Pekar, a real and rusted-up gentleman from Cleveland. He works as a filing clerk, and his experiences have long been the subject of a comic strip, illustrated by—among others—Robert Crumb. So we get a good dose of Harvey. But we get an even better and funnier dose of Paul Giamatti, who plays an alternative Harvey, and who is framed, or sometimes drawn, in fond imitation of a comic book—the implication being that even the cruddiest lives can, in sympathetic hands, acquire shape and grace. The story, such as it is, moves from Harvey the record collector to Harvey the cancer sufferer to Harvey the chat-show guest. There is terrific supporting work from Hope Davis as Mrs. Pekar and from Judah Friedlander as Harvey's profoundly unusual friend Toby. Mild fame may have patronized these folks, but the movie pays them a comic homage that feels flattering, fast-witted, and true.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/18 & 25/03.) (BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)



At Film Forum, Jean Gabin in Jacques Becker's "Touchez Pas au Grisbi."

AMERICAN WEDDING
After three dates, the "American Pie" franchise has become a dull and familiar affair. Jesse Dylan's lacklustre direction strands the actors in a series of raunchy, stale bachelor-party gags, and the original ensemble cast has been shaved down to the bare minimum. (That should have been a warning.) Of those who chose to return, only the reliable Eugene Levy manages some gifted bits.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BAD BOYS II
Action porn. The producer Jerry Bruckheimer and the director Michael Bay's buddy-cop destructorama has all the editing beats of a sex film. A few lines of dialogue (delivered, for the most part, with fake enthusiasm by Will Smith and Martin Lawrence) followed by bursting gunfire, theatrical chases, and the inevitable big-bang ending.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE BATTLE OF SHAKER HEIGHTS
Not as bad as you might think, considering the infighting captured on "Project Greenlight 2," the television show that chronicled the making of this movie. Throughout the series, the tag-team directors Kyle Rankin and Efram Potelle locked horns with the producer Chris Moore about whether the film should make 'em laugh or make 'em cry. Moore dropped vague comments like "I'm worried about the melodrama," while Rankin and Potelle huddled around the camera like twins lost in their own language. In the film itself, Shia LaBeouf is the young star and the hero, and he's very good at acting raw and confused—imagine a Mark Ruffalo, Jr. He also gets off a few good lines, but the coming-of-age story feels so jumbled up and patched together that it never acquires any emotional coherence. Then there are the little things, like the palm trees that grow in Ohio. But if you saw the show, you probably have to see the movie so think of your ticket price as a donation for "Project Greenlight 3."—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

BUFFALO SOLDIERS
Specialist Ray Elwood (Joaquin Phoenix) is having a ball. The year is 1989, the place is West Germany, and the pickings could not be riper, or easier to pluck. Elwood is the battalion clerk in an antiquated peacetime outfit, and, in the absence of combat, he devotes his skills to the black market and the heroin trade. Into this pleasant routine comes Sergeant Lee (Scott Glenn), who sees Elwood as a grifter and a slacker; Elwood, in turn, has eyes only for the sergeant's teen-age daughter (Anna Paquin). The director, Gregor Jordan, gets harsh laughs from all this mischief, but his grasp of Army life feels unstable, and Phoenix is enjoyable rather than credible in the role of a hipster Bilko. As for the casting of Ed Harris as a feeble and hapless colonel, isn't that against regulations? Too much of the second half is consumed by the nocturnal niceties of a drug plot—a pity, because a film about the joys and travails of the American military abroad could hardly be more apposite. With Elizabeth McGovern, almost unrecognizable as the colonel's wife, and a fall-down cameo for the Berlin Wall.—*A.L.* (8/11/03) (Village East Cinemas.)

LA CIÉNAGA
The title of this 2001 movie translates as "The Swamp," and here it applies to the claustrophobic confines of a summer mansion and the imploding family that inhabits it, like refugees from a Cheever story. Lucrecia Martel, the Argentinean writer-director, has a gift for domestic detail—the way children talk over each other, the wordless stares, and the kind of mess people make when they never pick up after themselves. Her house is a complicated latticework of servants, cousins, and half-remembered quarrels and affairs. There is little nobility on display; when the family matriarch takes to her bed, her daughters and son spend most of the day beside her. Martel has chosen to shine a light on the accumulated sadness of compromise, a world without grace. In Spanish.—*M.A.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 5-6.)

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS
The British director Stephen Frears leaves the pleasant angst of "High Fidelity" behind and delivers a difficult and resolute movie about illegal immigrants in London. The story has all the elements of film noir—a black marketeer, dingy apartments, prostitution—but the frame is often suffused with a harsh, hospital-white light. Frears and his screenwriter Steve Knight sidestep the standard benchmarks of the immigrant story by shaping their material as a moral thriller. Chiwetel Ejiofor delivers a brilliant performance as Okwe, a Nigerian man who gets involved with some bloody subterfuge at the posh hotel where he works. Audrey Tautou, the über-gamine, is less convincing as a Turkish runaway, but she's still likable, and Frears tips the action into motion so gracefully that you almost don't notice the characters' fates aligning against each other. He also doesn't flinch from the

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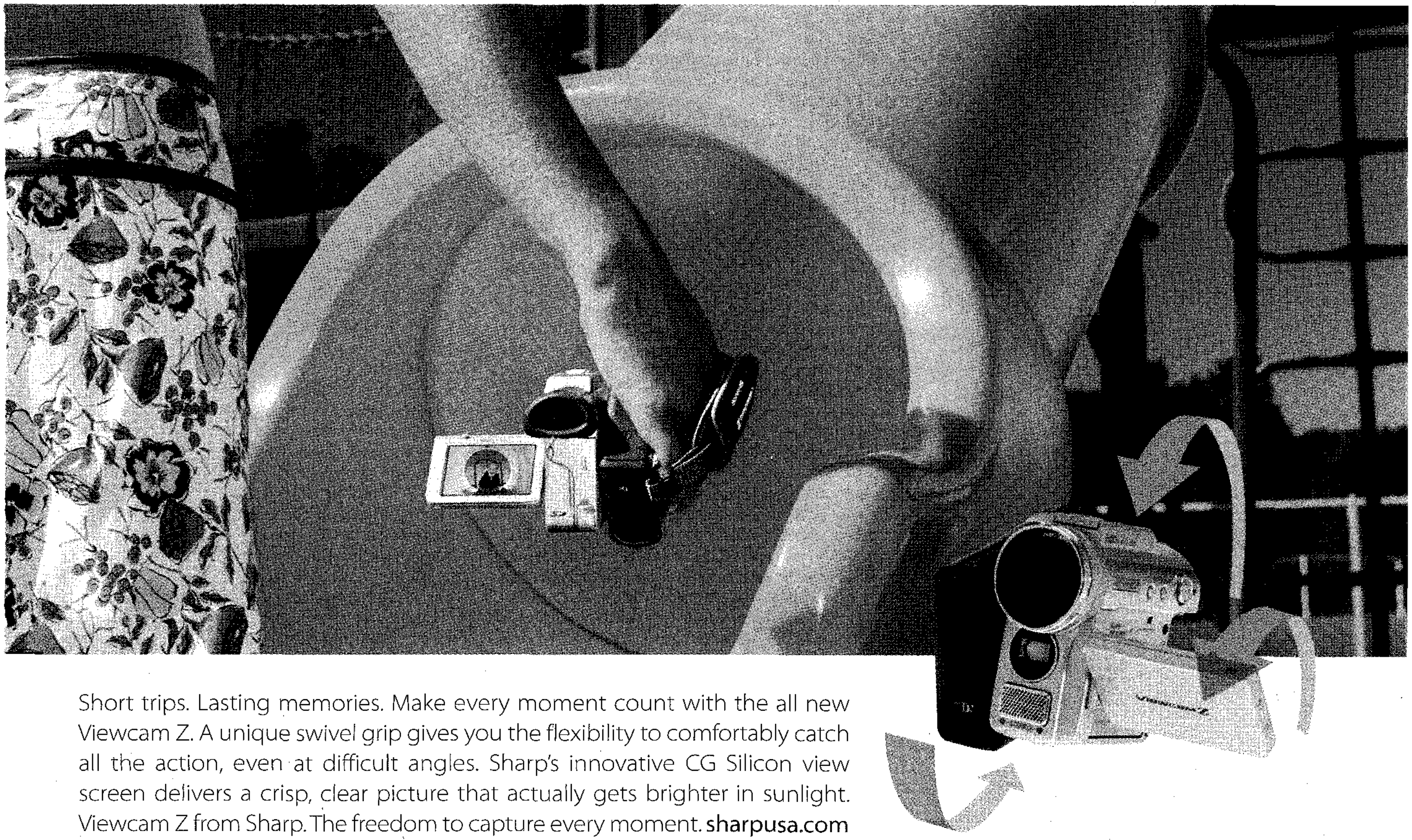

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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

portrayal of some ugly moments; the somewhat pat romantic justice of the ending comes as a welcome relief.—*M.A.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, and Sunshine Cinema.)

LE DIVORCE

A Merchant-Ivory movie set in the present, which makes for a change. This one is the tale of two sisters: Isabel (Kate Hudson), who flies to Paris to visit her sister Roxy (Naomi Watts), who has married a dodgy Frenchman. Cue any number of cross-cultural collisions, as our hopeful young Americans—today's Daisy Millers—become ensnared in the oily grasp of old Europe. Isabel finds herself in bed with Edgar (Thierry Lhermitte), who has the decency to look faintly embarrassed about it. The movie contemplates sex, as well as abortion, suicide, and mental instability, but the director, James Ivory, seems fatally undecided as to whether such matters are worthy of solemn consideration or mere backdrops to a bit of fun. The moral of the piece, finally, appears to be "Don't marry out of your tribe," which is nice to know in these days of international suspicion. Wasted actors include Stockard Channing, Sam Waterston, Bebe Neuwirth, Glenn Close, and Matthew Modine; that's a lot of waste. Leslie Caron offers as pure a definition of grande dame as you are likely to find.—*A.L.* (8/18 & 25/03) (Paris and Union Square.)

FREAKY FRIDAY

The beloved Disney teen movie from 1976 gets a power-pop makeover. As in the original, mother and daughter magically switch bodies, and the best parts are when they put each other's lives through the paces. The saucer-eyed Lindsay Lohan, as the daughter, morphs from a slouching rocker into a perfect-posture girl, a Junior League aspirant set loose in high school. Jamie Lee Curtis has the more difficult assignment, contorting her adult body into the ungainly angles of adolescence. She pulls off the transformation with precision, and both she and Lohan grace their scenes with moments of dead-on physical parody. Together, they provide a delightful double take on the old mother-to-daughter mantra: Act your age.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE LADY EVE

A frivolous masterpiece. Like "Bringing Up Baby," "The Lady Eve" is a mixture of visual and verbal slapstick, and of high artifice and pratfalls. Barbara Stanwyck keeps sticking out a sensational leg, and Henry Fonda keeps tripping over it. She's a cardsharp, and he's a millionaire scientist who knows more about snakes than about women; neither performer has ever been funnier. The 1941 film, based on a story by Monckton Hoffe, and with screenplay and direction by Preston Sturges, is full of classic moments and classic lines; it represents the dizzy high point of Sturges's comedy writing.—*Pauline Kael* (Gramercy Theatre; Sept. 5.)

THE MAGDALENE SISTERS

A scalding new picture from Peter Mullan, set in Ireland in the nineteen-sixties. Three girls are sent to a Magdalene Asylum—one of a network of institutions to which wayward young women were consigned by their disapproving families. The asylums were run by Roman Catholic nuns; in this case, the presiding spirit is Sister Bridget (Geraldine McEwan), who counts her money in secret and speaks to her charges with a forked tongue. Finally, the trio of friends—played by Anne-Marie Duff, Dorothy Duffy, and Nora-Jane Noone—make their escape, as if from a prisoner-of-war camp. The system was certainly crushing, but it has inspired Mullan—a fine actor, whose previous film as director, "Orphans," was a scabrous Glaswegian comedy—to deliver his most intemperate work, which lashes out at the Catholic Church with the same hardness of heart that Sister Bridget and her colleagues display in their running of the asylum. You come away from the movie not just convinced but cowed.—*A.L.* (8/11/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

OPEN RANGE

A slow-moving, traditional Western shot in the high, green valleys of the Canadian Rockies, a darkly beautiful landscape that unfurls across the screen like velvet. Robert Duvall and Kevin Costner are "freegrazers"—cattlemen who roam through the land with their herds—and Michael Gambon is the viciously corrupt big landowner who wants to exterminate them. There's nothing terribly striking about the film, but in a time of hyperkinetic spectacle, the lethargy of "Open Range" is almost soothing. With Annette Bening as the voice of civilization—a doctor's assistant waiting for a man.—*David Denby* (9/1/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

ORPHEUS

A masterpiece of magical filmmaking. Though it is a narrative treatment of the legend of Orpheus in a Parisian setting, this 1949 film, written and directed by Jean Cocteau, is as inventive and as enigmatic as a dream. Orpheus (Jean Marais), the successful poet who is envied and despised by younger poets, needs to renew himself; he tries to push beyond the limits of human experience, to reach the unknowable—the mystery beyond mortality. Dark, troubled, passionate Maria Casarès is his Death: attended by her roaring motorcyclists, the hooded messengers of death, she is mystery incarnate. The jazzy modern milieu has urgency, and Cocteau uses emblems and images of the then recent Nazi period and merges them with more primitive images of fear. This gives the violence and mystery of the Orpheus story a contemporaneity that, in other hands, might seem merely chic; Cocteau's special gift was to raise chic to art.—*P.K.* (Gramercy Theatre; Sept. 4 and Sept. 7.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL

As the pirate captain Jack Sparrow, Johnny Depp does not so much walk as sashay into a scene, and he wears more eyeshadow than Tammy Faye Bakker. He gives this exuberant family entertainment an amiable sheen of silliness (the performance offers diverse echoes of W. C. Fields, Toshiro Mifune, and Keith Richards on a bender). Depp leaves a lot of the duelling and all of the lovemaking to Orlando Bloom (from "The Lord of the Rings"), who plays a young blacksmith with pirate blood in his veins, a fellow much loved by the daughter of the British governor of a Caribbean colony, Keira Knightley (she has a thing for swashbucklers). The movie is based on the famous old Disneyland ride, and it's good, cheesy fun, complete with tall ships, battles at sea, and accursed pirates who turn into skeletons in moonlight. As Barbossa, the pirate who deposed Captain Jack, Geoffrey Rush eyeballs his victims and stretches out his syllables in the taunting manner of Robert Newton, who specialized in stump-legged scoundrels fifty years ago.—*D.D.* (7/28/03) (Battery Park 16, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SEABISCUIT

Gary Ross's adaptation of Laura Hillenbrand's 2001 best-seller about the miraculous racehorse of the nineteen-thirties has been shaped as a national epic—not as a good story but as *the* good story. The horse, knobby-kneed and perverse, comes from behind and knocks off the more famous Thoroughbreds of the era. He is saved from obscurity by an unlikely trio: Charles Howard (Jeff Bridges), a millionaire auto salesman with a venturesome streak; Tom Smith (Chris Cooper), a down-and-out trainer, practically a relic of the nineteenth century; and Johnny (Red) Pollard (Tobey Maguire), an embittered, not terribly talented boxer and jockey. The horse becomes such a popular favorite that, as Hillenbrand and Ross tell it, he redeems the millions of unemployed "forgotten men" in the Depression. In case we don't get the point, there are solemn interludes of photomontage accompanied by narration from the historian David McCullough. The Oscar-hungry movie stamps itself with a seal of approval rather than simply telling its story. Much of it, however, is beautifully made in conservative-humanist style, and the races are thrilling. With William H. Macy in a great bit as a poetizing radio announcer.—*D.D.* (8/4/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cin-

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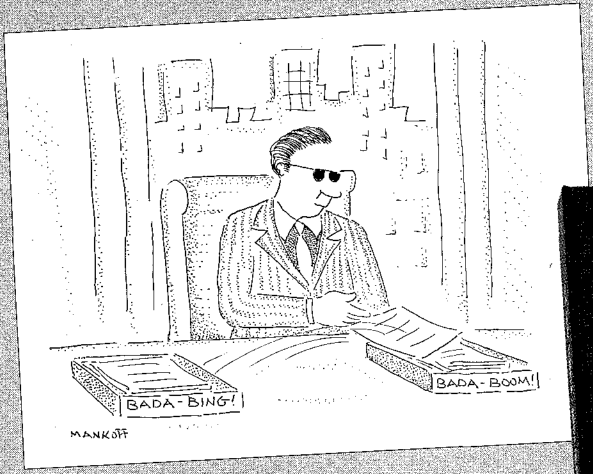
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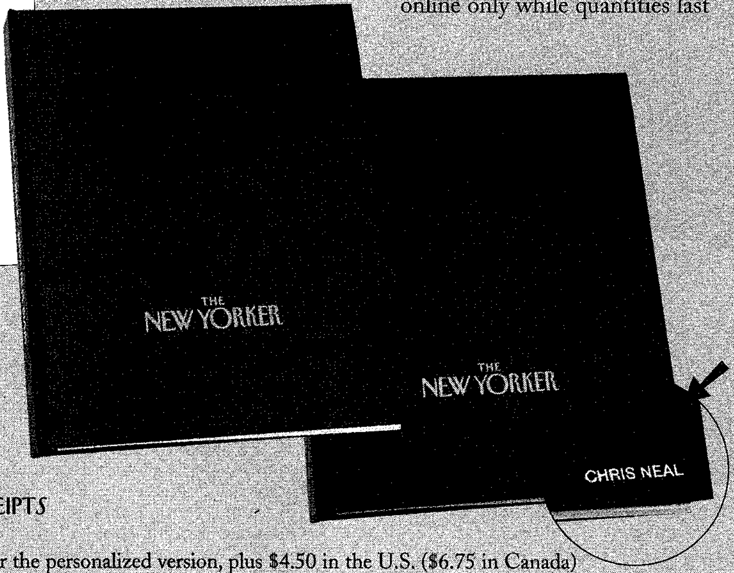
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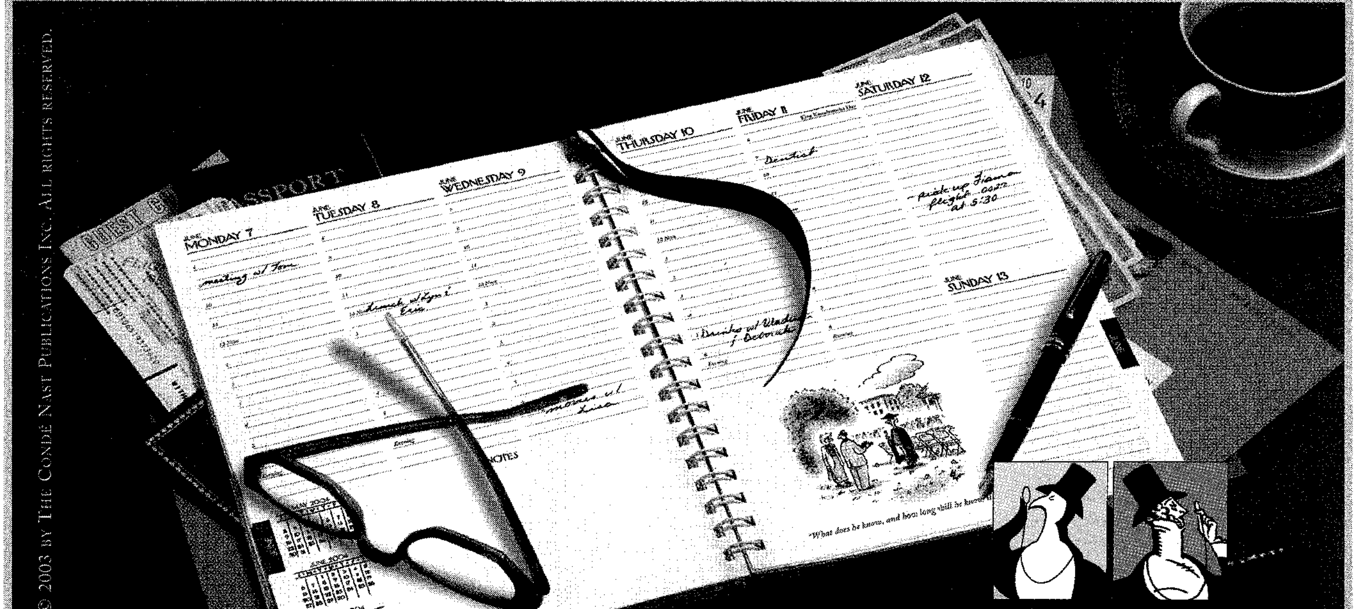
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emas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SECRET LIVES OF DENTISTS
In Alan Rudolph's marital drama, a suburban dentist (Campbell Scott) who shares his practice with his wife (Hope Davis) suspects her of having an affair. Scott's character is a model of repression—he doesn't want to know anything about his wife's infidelity that would cause him to act—and the film plays out as a maddening rush of imagined scenarios (the writer Craig Lucas invests his script with more than a few comic moments to goose the inaction along). The outstanding performances of the two leads do much to tether Rudolph's loose style. The film is steeped in a queasy emotional containment that nails the experience of true domestic dread.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, and 72nd Street East.)

STEP INTO LIQUID
A clever name for a classic surfing documentary. Dana Brown's movie has the exotic locations, breezy narration, uplifting stories, and cracked surfer wisdom you expect from the genre. What sets the movie apart is the astonishing sequence that ends it, in which a team of surfers use Jet Skis to catch the sixty-foot waves they find in the middle of the ocean. Other notable interludes include the guys who surf the freezing, muddy waters of Lake Michigan and the professional women surfers who test their mettle at Tahiti's Teahupo'o, dubbed "the Wave with Teeth" because it breaks over a shallow coral reef.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Empire 25.)

SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS
The writer-director Preston Sturges's 1941 comedy about a popular—slightly fatuous—Hollywood director (Joel McCrea), who feels that his hits, such as "Ants in Your Plants of 1939," aren't worthy of a war-devastated world. To research his next project, a relevant film to be called "O Brother, Where Art Thou?," he gets dressed up as a tramp and goes out to investigate the lower depths. Sturges is more at home in slapstick irony than in the mixed tones of this comedy-melodrama, but it's a memorable film nevertheless. With Veronica Lake, underacting with perfect composure, Margaret Hayes, and many of the actors Sturges delighted in and used repeatedly—William Demarest, Franklin Pangborn, Robert Warwick, Porter Hall, Eric Blore, Esther Howard, Jimmy Conlin, Chester Conklin, and others. Sturges himself can be glimpsed behind Veronica Lake on a set inside the movie studio.—*P.K.* (Gramercy Theatre; Sept. 5.)

SWIMMING POOL
Charlotte Rampling gives another outstanding performance, this time as an uptight mystery writer who accepts an offer from her publisher to use his house in the South of France for some inspiration. When his sexy daughter (the luscious Ludivine Sagnier) shows up uninvited, a slow-burning and deliberately abstract mystery is set in motion. The director François Ozon (who's worked with Rampling before, in the very similar "Under the Sand") crafts a seductive puzzle that may have audiences wondering, in a pleasant way, what it was that they just saw. In French and English.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE TAKING OF PELHAM ONE TWO THREE
Once just a solid thriller, now a time capsule spiked with amphetamines, this subway-hijack picture from 1974 taps into viewers' paranoia over a decrepit, vulnerable infrastructure and then provides bitter laughs and a harrowing catharsis. It may be the perfect movie for post-blackout New Yorkers. Four armed men (Robert Shaw, Martin Balsam, Hector Elizondo, and Earl Hindman) who, in dapper disguise, look like suburban invaders (well, maybe not Balsam; he's impossible to disguise) commandeer a car and eighteen hostages and demand a million-dollar ransom. They're got a clever plan, but they don't count on the sly ruminations of the Transit Authority lieutenant Walter Matthau. This offbeat star's ironic air—his ability to appear omniscient even when he's blowing smoke—sends jolts of iconoclastic mirth into the fetid atmosphere. Yet his irresistible low key depends on the rest of the cast's operating at full steam. And what a cast! It includes James Broderick, Kenneth McMillan, Julius Harris, Tony Roberts, Doris Roberts, and Jerry Stiller, who cracks that the hijackers are going to fly the subway to Cuba.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Sept. 3-4.)

THIRTEEN
Evan Rachel Wood is Trace, a Los Angeles junior-high-schooler going nuts from being thirteen. Nikki Reed is Evie, the fast, knowing, cat-eyed girl Trace develops a crush on. The two cruise the shops on Melrose Avenue, buying or stealing what they need, and they dress for school like baby whores. This sensational (in both senses) independent feature, directed by the former set designer Catherine Hardwicke and shot by ace cameraman Elliot Davis, is an emotionally coherent work about incoherent longing—the girls abuse themselves and others and run from one extreme emotion to another. The movie is so absorbing and intelligent that you don't feel repelled by the destructiveness of what they do. With Holly Hunter in a brave performance as Mel, Trace's forty-five-ish mother, who is herself a kind of teen-ager. Nikki Reed poured a lot of her own disasters into the script, which was written in collaboration with Hardwicke.—*D.D.* (9/1/03) (Beekman, Empire 25, 19th Street East 6, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI
Jacques Becker's 1953 portrait of a stylish middle-aged thief named Max (the incomparable Jean Gabin) set the standard for the French underworld crime capers to follow, yet it retains a mellow kick all its own. Subplots slide away fluidly, like the skin of a cocktail onion; the picture starts *after* Max has made what he hopes will be his last big score. What's crucial proves to be his friendship with his longtime partner, Riton (René Dary), whose inability to age gracefully or to handle an unsatisfied mistress (the young Jeanne Moreau) puts their giant stash at risk. The movie overflows with comic, melancholy ruminations on mortality and sexual fatigue. When Max invites Riton to a swank secret apartment and lays out their plans along with wine and pâté, the sequence plays like a troubled honeymoon for a platonic male marriage. Yet the movie never falls into macho camp. The action is just as vicious as it has to be, and Becker pulls off one tough-guy surprise after another with masterly soft-shoe storytelling. Best of all, Gabin's performance is more than a star turn. He reveals how hard it is for a gangster to keep up a "class act." The co-stars include Lino Ventura in his film début as Max's nemesis; Jean Weiner's music does for the harmonica what the score for "The Third Man" did for the zither. In French.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; starting Sept. 5.)

28 DAYS LATER
Another helpful development for the British Tourist Board. Danny Boyle's horror film, alternately savage and glum, shows London—and, by implication, most of England—destroyed by a fast-acting plague. Borne in the blood, it passes from one Brit to another with a single bite; soon, the capital is empty save for marauding zombies, leaving the unchewed—such as Jim (Cillian Murphy) and Selena (Naomie Harris)—to drift around, shop without paying, and never quite have sex. Any resemblance to normal teen-age behavior is entirely coincidental. Brendan Gleeson, much the best and cheeriest thing in the movie, plays a taxi-driver who helps them to leave town; from here on, Boyle and his screenwriter, Alex Garland, run out of gas. The picture is twitchy and annoying, flecked with blood and half-digested ideas, and too much is left unexplained. As a scheme for solving central London's traffic problem, though, it is unlikely to be surpassed.—*A.L.* (6/30/03) (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

WINGED MIGRATION
The French filmmaker Jacques Perrin shows us things we have never seen before: the alien world of insects in "Microcosmos" and, now, migrating birds in all their airborne glory. Perrin and his team of camera operators employ remote-control gliders and balloons to astonishing effect—the camera literally flies alongside the birds as they wing their way north and south in their search for food. They capture some amazing solo efforts, like the common

murre who plunges off a ten-story seaside cliff, as well as the beauty of numbers, as in the scene of an entire flock of white-faced whistling ducks, all turning their heads at once. The images are mostly left alone, with minimal dialogue and endurable New Age music. Bird-lovers will be in heaven, and the less ornithologically inclined will be surprised to learn that some Canada geese don't hang around golf courses all winter. Among the more unforgettable birds on display is the Clark's grebe, which can pull off the cool trick of walking on water.—*M.A.* (Lincoln Square and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

AUTUMN SPRING
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.
THE BACKYARD
Cinema Village.
FINDING NEMO (6/9/03)
Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.
MASKED AND ANONYMOUS
Village East Cinemas.
ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE MIDLANDS
Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.
RANA'S WEDDING
Cinema Village.
SPELLBOUND
Quad Cinema.
STOKED: THE RISE AND FALL OF GATOR
Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 7: "Eyes Wide Open: The Evolution of Widescreen Cinema." Sept. 6-7 at 2: "THX 1138" (1971, George Lucas). ♦ Sept. 6 at 4: "Manhattan" (1979, Woody Allen). ♦ Sept. 7 at 4: "I Stand Alone" (1998, Gaspar Noé; in French). ♦ Repertory nights. Sept. 5 at 7:30 and Sept. 6-7 at 6:30: "Apocalypse Now Redux" (1979/2001, Francis Ford Coppola).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Sept. 4 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Almacita, Soul of Desolato" (1986, Felix De Rooy; in Papiamentu). ♦ Sept. 5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Medea" (1987, Lars Von Trier; in Danish). ♦ Sept. 6-7: "The Best of the NewFest," recent gay and lesbian films. ♦ Sept. 8-9 at 6:50 and 9:10: "The World According to Shorts," international short films.

CENTRAL PARK FILM FESTIVAL
Rumsey Playfield, E. 69th St., near Fifth Ave.—Free outdoor screenings. All films start at 8. Sept. 3: "Annie Hall" (1977, Woody Allen). ♦ Sept. 4: "The Producers" (1968, Mel Brooks). ♦ Sept. 5: "The Fisher King" (1992, Terry Gilliam). ♦ Sept. 6: "Ghostbusters" (1984, Ivan Reitman). ♦ Sept. 7: "Hair" (1979, Milos Forman).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Sept. 3-4 at 1:30, 3:35, 5:40, 7:45, and 9:50: "The Taking of Pelham One Two Three" (†). ♦ Starting Sept. 5 at 1:30, 3:25, 5:30, 7:25, and 9:20: "Touchez Pas au Grisbi" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of the actress Jane Birkin. Sept. 9 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Jane B par Agnès V" (1986-87, Agnès Varda; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—The summer repertory series. Sept. 4 at 2 and Sept. 6 at 8:30: "Les Créatures" (1966, Agnès Varda; in French). ♦ Sept. 4 at 4 and Sept. 7 at 4:30: "Orpheus" (†). ♦ Sept. 4 at 6:30 and Sept. 7 at 6:45: "Testament of Orpheus" (1960, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ Sept. 4 at 8:15 and Sept. 7 at 2: "The Blood of a Poet" (1930, Cocteau; in French) and "L'Âge d'Or" (1930, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Sept. 5 at 2: "The Hire" (2001-02, Ang Lee et al.). ♦ Sept. 5 at 4: "Abraham Lincoln" (1930, D. W. Griffith). ♦ Sept. 5 at 6: "The Lady Eve" (†). ♦ Sept. 5 at 8: "Sullivan's Travels" (†). ♦ Sept. 6 at 1 and Sept. 8 at 8: "The Eagle Has Two Heads" (1947, Cocteau; in French). ♦ Sept. 6 at 3 and Sept. 8 at 6: "Les Parents Terribles" (1948, Cocteau; in French). ♦ Sept. 6 at 5:30: "Painters Painting" (1972, Emile de Antonio).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Sept. 5-6: "Barbarella" (1968, Roger Vadim).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Sept. 4: "The Whole Wide World: Fifty Years of Widescreen Moviemaking." Sept. 3 at 1: "Play Dirty" (1969, André de Toth). ♦ Sept. 3 at 9:15: "They Live" (1988, John Carpenter). ♦ Sept. 4 at 1: "Two-Lane Blacktop" (1971, Monte Hellman). ♦ Starting Sept. 5: "Latinbeat 2003," a survey of recent films from Latin America and a tribute to the Argentinean producer Lita Stantic. All films are in Spanish. Sept. 5 at 1 and 9:30 and Sept. 9 at 7:30: "Minimal Stories" (2002, Carlos Sorín). ♦ Sept. 5 at 3 and Sept. 9 at 3:10 and 9:30: "About the Living" (2002, Jorge Aguilera). ♦ Sept. 5 at 4:45 and Sept. 6 at 8:45: "La Ciénaga" (†). ♦ Sept. 6 at 1, Sept. 7 at 8:45, and Sept. 8 at 1: "Francisca (. . . Which Side Are You On?)" (2001, Eva López Sánchez). ♦ Sept. 6 at 3:30 and Sept. 9 at 1: "A Wall of Silence" (1993, Lita Stantic). ♦ Sept. 6 at 6:15 and Sept. 8 at 3 and 9:30: "A Lucky Day" (2002, Sandra Gugliotta). ♦ Sept. 7 at 1: "Camila" (1984, Maria Luisa Bemberg). ♦ Sept. 7 at 3:45: "Valentin" (2002, Alejandro Agresti). ♦ Sept. 7 at 6:15 and Sept. 8-9 at 5: "The Blondes" (2003, Albertina Carri).

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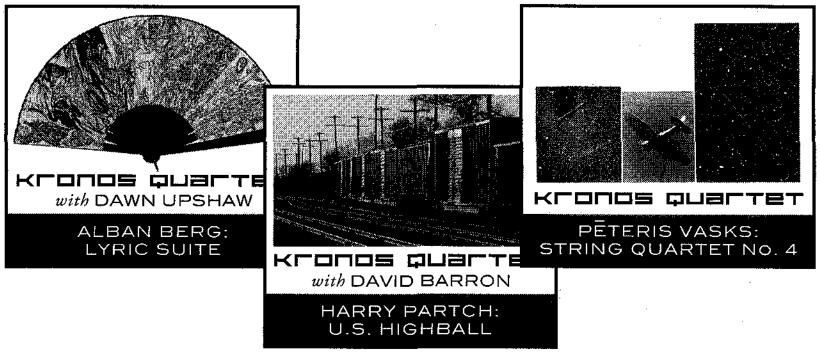

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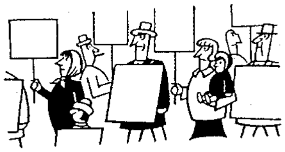
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
MOSES IN ALABAMA



In 1802, Thomas Jefferson wrote in a letter to the Danbury Baptists—the letter in which he introduced the metaphor of "a wall of separation between Church and State"—that he was convinced that man "has no natural right in opposition to his social duties." It is the Enlightenment world view in a nutshell, the faith behind the Declaration of Independence's shocking idea that governments are instituted to preserve the God-given rights of their citizens. This belief that spiritual values can run on all fours with civic duty, that the good, in the end, maps perfectly onto the just, has been supremely inspiring in the abstract, and the source of endless trouble in the everyday.

The removal, last week, from the rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Court Building of the huge rock engraved with the Ten Commandments that had been placed there surreptitiously two years earlier by the court's Chief Justice, Roy Moore, brought to a close one chapter, though possibly not the final chapter, in a kind of fundamentalist "Walking Tall." Chief Justice Moore (now suspended from his office), with his pre-judicial experience as a military policeman, full-contact karate expert, and professional kickboxer, is not, in fact, a bad stand-in for the legendary Buford Pusser. Moore did not elect to identify himself with Buford Pusser, however; he elected to identify himself with Martin Luther King, Jr. The claim seemed to many people the delusional high point of what was already being treated, outside Alabama, as a fairly farcical crusade. Roy Moore is no Martin Luther King; he is, as a number of commentators have justly called him, a demagogue. He is not an enemy of prejudice and intolerance; he is prejudice's inflamer. But, if the invocation of Dr. King is any measure, he is not stupid.

"If we are wrong," King cried in 1955, in the great speech to the Montgomery bus boycotters in the Holt Street Baptist Church which launched his career as a civil-rights leader, "the Constitution of the United States is wrong." His next line got more cheers. "If we are wrong," he said, "God Almighty is wrong." It was King's genius to see that in the matter of racial equality the teachings of the Christian Bible are on all fours with the promise of the Constitution and its amendments, that the principles of justice considered spiritually (we are all God's children) are identical to the principles of justice considered legally (every citizen is entitled to equal protection under the law). With one brilliant stroke, he transformed what had been a legal struggle into a spiritual one, and lost nothing in the bargain.

Roy Moore and his defenders and apologists have been advancing the same argument—that God's laws (the Christian God's, that is) are the foundation for, and are therefore entirely congruous with, man-made American law. As a national platitude, at the "In God We Trust" level of things, this seems unexceptionable to everyone except those who might be called card-carrying atheists, people who become litigious every time they hear a reference to God in a public place. What makes the Roy's Rock story so bizarre, though, is that the Justice's chosen symbol completely subverts the point it is supposed to make. Of the Bible's Ten Commandments, only two (VI and VIII) proscribe activities that secular law regards as criminal. It is not illegal in the United States to: have another god before Yahweh; manufacture graven images (for instance, pieces of granite with Scriptural texts carved on them); say "God damn it" when you spill the ketchup; go to "Terminator 3" on Sunday; abuse (verbally) your parents; engage in extramarital sex; or (except under oath) tell untrue stories about your neighbor. And if it were a crime to

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PALMA

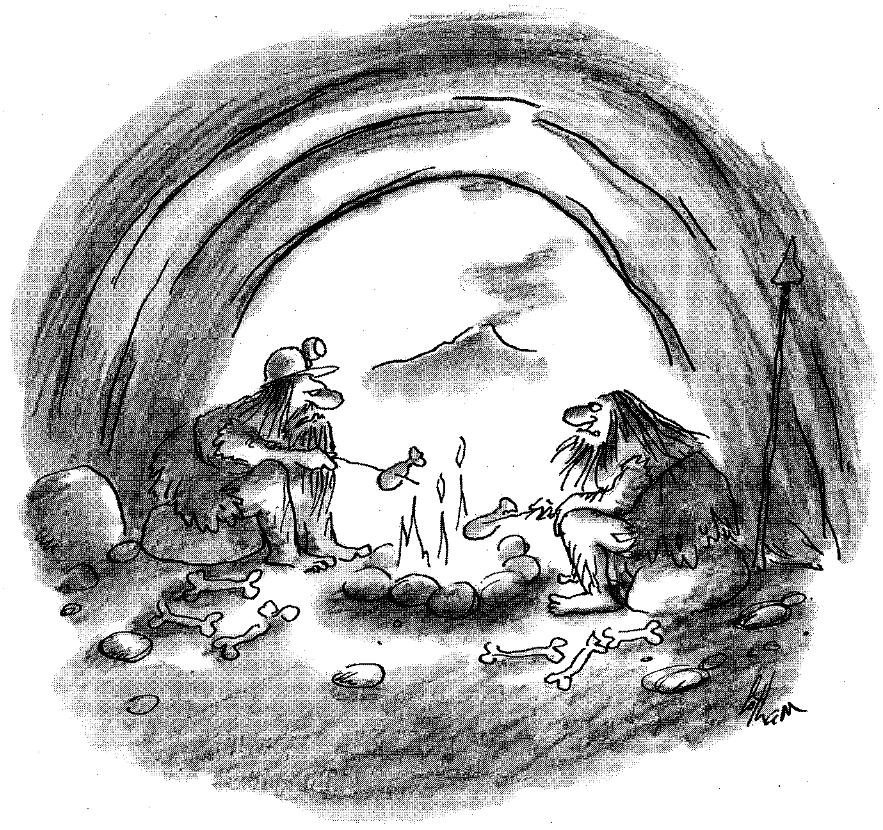
covet the ass parked in the driveway of the people next door, it is hard to know how capitalism would survive. Coveting asses is the whole basis of our prosperity.

Treating the case of Roy's Rock as the constitutional slam dunk it surely is allows civil libertarians to ignore, for the moment, the disturbing fact that the law concerning Jefferson's "wall of separation" is an incoherent mess. The "establishment" clause of the First Amendment is a fork with two distinct prongs. Congress is enjoined from any measure "respecting an establishment of religion," but also from any measure "prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Difficulties arise when a ban on religious activity in a public place looks like a prohibition of people's freedom to exercise it. After-school Bible-study groups are the classic example.

Since 1971, judicial hairsplitting in these matters has been guided by the so-called Lemon Test, named for the case of Lemon v. Kurtzman, in which the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional laws in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania that provided state moneys to parochial schools for the sole purpose of secular instruction. Chief Justice Warren Burger, for a unanimous court, announced that, to pass constitutional muster, a law touching on religion must (1) "have a secular legislative purpose"; (2) neither advance nor inhibit religion; and (3) not foster "excessive government entanglement with religion." This is about as fuzzy a set of criteria as one could wish for, and deliberately so. Like many "tests" devised to determine the conformity of particular laws to constitutional amendments, the Lemon Test provides language sufficiently flexible to support whatever outcome a majority of justices instinctively prefer. And so thirteen years later, in Lynch v. Donnelly, Justice Burger himself wrote—in tones suggesting outrage that the case had even been brought—an opinion upholding the right of the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, to sponsor a crèche in a Christmas display that included other seasonal symbols. Burger's argument in that opinion was the same argument that has been used to uphold the constitutionality of Sunday blue laws: that sponsoring a crèche is an example of a legitimate exercise of legislative power that *just happens* to coincide with the practices of a particular religion. The elected representatives of the people of Pawtucket chose to mark a national holiday with a display, and it *just happened* that the Nativity scene traditionally associated with that holiday is a central element of Christian worship.

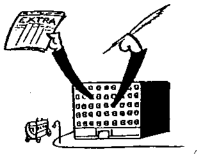
Mosaic law does not coincide with American law—and not surprisingly, since Mosaic law is the law of theocracy, not of democracy. It instructs people what they should believe, not, or not only, how they must act. The United States does not impose that test on its citizens. It's nice when the way the law requires us to act *just happens* to be the way we believe people ought to act, when what is a duty is also what comes naturally. But it will not always be so. If Roy Moore and his supporters wish to bring American law into greater conformity with the Ten Commandments, there are democratic procedures available that will allow them to do so. They have every right to try. Let's hope that they fail.

—*Louis Menand*



"And then one day the grid went down and never came back up."

THIS JUST IN DEPT.
FIT TO PRINT?



Aficionados of the Drudge Report may have noticed several striking headlines recently linking to stories from the World Tribune, an enterprise with a title as grand and ambitious as it is unfamiliar. One such story last week began, "U.S. intelligence suspects Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have finally been located." The apparent scoop—of stop-the-presses significance—was unsigned, and billed as a "special to World Tribune.com." The *Times*, the *Journal*, and the Washington *Post*, meanwhile, not only got beat but failed even to acknowledge the news in the days that followed. What gives?

Not everyone ignored it: Rush Limbaugh, for instance. "There's a piece in the World Tribune today—one of the papers in the United Kingdom—exactly as theorized on this program early on," he said on his radio show. "It's unconfirmed, but it's a story that many of the weapons of mass destruction are at present buried in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon." Fox News, catering to a similar demographic, enlisted a military analyst that evening to discuss potential ramifications—military intervention in Lebanon?—on "The O'Reilly Factor." According to the story, the weap-

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ons were probably delivered to the Bekaa Valley, a Hezbollah stronghold, in a caravan of tractor-trailers that was spotted leaving Iraq in January, two months before the war began, as part of a multimillion-dollar storage deal between Saddam Hussein and the Syrian government.

In fact, the World Tribune is not published in the United Kingdom, nor is it, to be precise, a newspaper. It is a Web site produced, more or less as a hobby, in Falls Church, Virginia, and is dedicated to the notion, as its mission statement explains, that "there is a market for news of the world and not just news of the weird." (Nonetheless, the site includes a prominent feature, Cosmic Tribune, with an extraterrestrial focus, and it links to a Mafia journal called Gang Land News.) Its editor and publisher, Robert Morton, is an assistant managing editor at the Washington *Times* and a former "corporate editor" for News World Communications, the *Times'* owner and the publishing arm of the Unification Church, led by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. (Morton and his wife, Choon Boon, are themselves followers of the Reverend Moon.) Among the World Tribune's other recent half-ignored scoops are that Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for last month's blackout and that a North Korean defector stressed, during a meeting in July with White House officials, the need for a preëmptive military strike against Kim Jong Il.

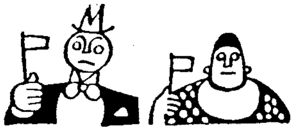
Morton said last week via e-mail that he founded the site as an experiment, back in 1998, while serving as a media fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, a conservative think tank. "I didn't expect World Tribune.com to last for more than a few months," Morton wrote, but now, despite having no dedicated staff ("Everyone involved with World Tribune.com has a day job"), the site receives more than a million page views per month. And, unlike the Washington *Times*, which has lost at least a billion dollars in its twenty-one-year existence, World Tribune.com, in concert with the subscription-driven weekly intelligence briefing Geostrategy-Direct.com (a partner site), has paid for itself.

The secret of its success seems to involve well-placed informants ("Over the years I have developed an informal, international network of sources and writers I can trust," Morton said) and an emphasis on immediacy. Although Morton said, "We emphasize newspaper standards to counter the half-baked, unfiltered content on some online sites," World Tribune.com more fairly qualifies as something between a newspaper and a rumor-mongering blog. Call it "blews." In this sense, it is part of a loose network of mostly conservative sites—WorldNetDaily, Dr. Koontz's National Security Message Board, DEBKA File (produced by a pair of Jerusalem-based journalists thought to have moles in Israeli intelligence)—whose dispatches sometimes serve as the journalistic equivalent of trial balloons: a story may not be based on knowable facts, but it nevertheless may occasionally turn out to be right. (Much of the time, of course, it more closely resembles a Bat Boy update in the *Weekly World News*.)

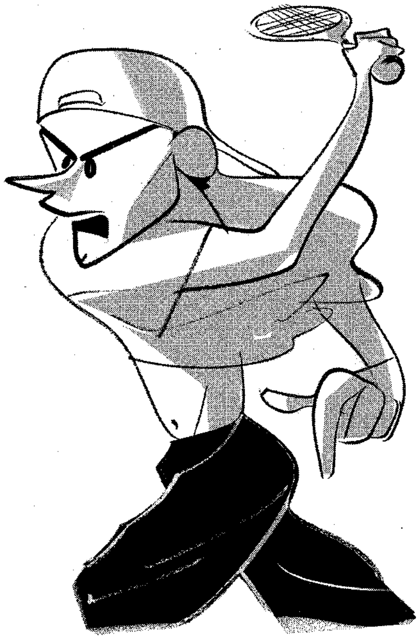
Take the Lebanon story. National-security buffs may have recalled hearing similar reports as far back as late December (beginning with an accusation from Ariel Sharon), and cropping up again in the spring (via DEBKA). The story never quite stuck, however, and as of the end of last week no major newspaper had seen fit to tell it. Bill Gertz, the Washington *Times'* best-known reporter, is a columnist and contributing editor for Geostrategy-Direct.com and a member of the World Tribune advisory board. A few days after the Tribune's Lebanon lead, Gertz allowed that he, too, had been hearing the reports for months but hadn't written anything about it for the paper. "I've never been able to nail it down myself," he said. He would presumably have encountered similar difficulties with the story, available at Cosmic Tribune, of the increase in observed U.F.O. activity as Mars neared.

—*Ben McGrath*

ON THE COURT
DOTING



For twenty-one-year-old Andy Roddick's first scheduled tennis match last week at the U.S. Open, his parents, Blanche and Jerry Roddick, turned up at Arthur Ashe Stadium and were taken in hand by SFX, Andy's marketing group. They were escorted to an air-conditioned luxury suite, equipped with a stocked refrigerator, sofas, television, bathroom, and a private terrace overlooking the court. The Roddicks brought guests, Stacy and Don Moore, the parents of Andy's girlfriend, the pop singer Mandy Moore. ("Andy isn't a musician, but he has remarkable rhythm, and he's a wonderful dancer," Blanche Roddick said.)



Andy Roddick

Both couples were obviously very fond of one another. The Roddicks greeted the SFX officials—handsome, muscular men in business suits, pretty women in short print dresses—with hugs and kisses. The Moores, for some reason, did likewise. SFX ("Spectacular, Fun, X-citing") has been representing Andy Roddick since 1999, when, as the national junior champion, he signed an endorsement deal with Reebok.

"We do a lot of things," one of the SFX women said. "Besides retail licensing, we represent professional athletes, coaches, broadcasters, movie stars, entertainers. We bring out the essence of who they are."

"Oh," Blanche Roddick said.

Ken Meyerson, a heavy-set, deeply tanned man who is the president of SFX Tennis, said, "Andy is unusual. Andy knows who he is. Andy is very smart, very articulate."

Blanche Roddick's eyes gleamed.

One of the young SFX agents said,

"Our media-training course is for some of our younger athletes—the ones who have to learn to make better eye contact with people, to cut out the 'uh's, the 'like's, the 'you know's. Those athletes."

Jerry Roddick reminded his wife that Andy's match with Tim Henman would be starting at eight, and he went out on the terrace to watch the late-afternoon match, between Andre Agassi and Alex Corretja.

"I've got to get myself ready to go down to the box and watch," Blanche Roddick said. "We never want to show any emotion to Andy, so we don't like to sit in the box, so close to the court. But we've got to sit down there tonight. We've also got to be careful to keep poker faces, because they're always turning the television cameras on us."

She looked at her watch. "About this time every day, I have a glass of white wine," she said. One of the hostesses in the suite brought her a glass.

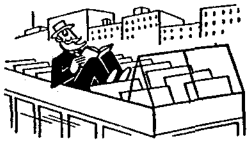
"Jerry and I were born in Platteville, Wisconsin, and we met there when he was a freshman at the University of Wisconsin and I was a senior in high school," she said. "Jerry lived on a dairy farm and had to work very hard for the farm and hated it. He's Andy's business manager now, and he says that's hard work, too. Jerry wasn't athletic, but I played golf and baseball and coached Little League. Jerry started Jiffy Lube stores in Nebraska and Texas. Then, in the Vietnam War, he was drafted and stationed in Fort Bliss, Texas. We moved around a lot and wound up in Omaha, Nebraska. Andy's older brother John played tennis, and Andy watched him. When Andy was three and a half, he started playing and was always carrying his racquet around and asking, 'When can I play?'" She took a sip of wine and went on: "When Andy was seven, his other brother, Lawrence, came to me and said, 'Andy has phenomenal hand-eye coördination.' Now Lawrence has a boy, one year old, my grandson, J.C. You know the way babies carry around their security blankets wherever they go? Well, J.C. does that with his tennis racquet. We say to him, 'Ready position, J.C.' And he takes his racquet back."

There was a stir outside on the terrace. Agassi was about to win his third set, 6–2. Blanche Roddick said, "When Andy was nine, we took him to the Open for the first time, on the subway, No. 7, and we've been taking the subway out here and back ever since. SFX put us up in a nice little hotel on East Fifty-fourth Street. It's very European. They call the elevator there 'the lift.'"

Jerry Roddick came in from the terrace and beckoned impatiently to his wife to come along. "We'll go down and see Andy to wish him luck, without showing any emotion," she said. "Then we'll see him when he comes off the court, and I'll get his sweaty kiss."

—*Lillian Ross*

DO IT YOURSELF DEPT.
LET'S GO CRAWFORD



There are guides leading tours of the Washington, D.C., White House, but if you want to see the Western White House, in Crawford, Texas, where President Bush has been based for the past month, you have to take a self-guided tour, which goes like this: You leave New York and drive about sixteen hundred miles southwest, through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, and Arkansas. You take Interstate 35 to Waco, Texas, head west on Route 84 to McGregor, and then north on Highway 317, where you will see a "Welcome to Crawford" sign that features the President and the First Lady. In a few minutes, you're in the heart of Crawford.

On your right is the Flatiron Building-size granary, which says "Bush Country" at the top, and the one-room jailhouse; on your left is an empty lot filled with weeds and wildflowers, and then the Yellow Rose of Texas, one of many souvenir shops that went up after the President moved to town, four years ago. The Yellow Rose was featured in a recent photograph on the front page of the *Lone Star Iconoclast;* the caption said, "A patriotic horse watches over downtown Crawford from the roof of the Yellow Rose of Texas store as a pick-up passes through the intersection of Lone Star Parkway and Cedar Rock Parkway." In the Yellow Rose, there is a wide selection of gifts and souvenirs, including camouflaged beer-bottle cozies that say "Western White House" on one side and "We will not tire. We will not falter. We will not fail" on the other; and handguns, displayed in a mirrored case decorated with little hearts and the date "9-11-01."

Proceed west on Cedar Rock Parkway. Immediately on your left is the Coffee Station, which is where the President poses with the people of Crawford and where Cabinet members are said to eat burgers. It is a good place to buy a cold drink, especially if you happen to have just walked around in downtown Crawford, where it feels as if it's about eight hundred degrees. At the Lutheran church, bear right onto Prairie Chapel Road and follow it for approximately seven miles. See lots of farmland and prairie. Pass over a dry creek. If a guy driving a shiny black S.U.V. passes you going a lot faster than thirty-five m.p.h. on a turn where the speed limit is thirty-five m.p.h., you might wonder if the Crawford police chief is going to catch him, since that same recent issue of the *Iconoclast* reported that the Crawford police chief just got a new radar gun.

Next, a windmill; a couple of goats sleeping under a tree; a large American flag; the Hickey Broken Spoke Ranch, where the President recently attended a barbecue for Republican donors; and then three dozen steers, or what look like steers to a self-guided New Yorker. It is at this point that the tour comes to the crest of a little hill, from which the road appears to be heading toward the end of the world.

Soon you come to a spot where you can just make out the roof of the Western White House. That's about all you can see of it, and, besides, in about a hundred yards you're at the turn in the road where Secret Service agents, along with state and local law-enforcement officials, are standing beside a few parked cars. They will turn you away. But they're generally nice about it—you don't get to see the snipers in the switchgrass or the Black Hawk helicopters on the ground. If you're really lucky, as you're finishing up you'll be passed by a convoy of police cars and shiny black S.U.V.s, which will be carrying the national security adviser and the Secretary of State. But be advised: that kind of thing probably doesn't happen on every self-guided Western White House tour. Usually, you just see the roof.

—*Robert Sullivan*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
EZ DOES IT

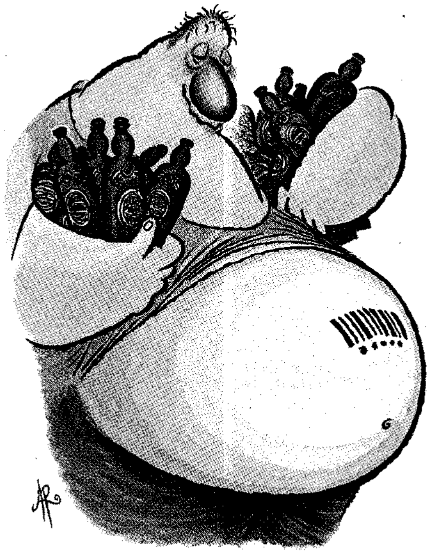
Among the three million or so items in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History is a ten-pack of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit gum, which was sold for sixty-seven cents at the Marsh Supermarket in Troy, Ohio, in 1974. The gum was ordinary enough, except for one thing: this was the first item ever to have its bar code scanned at a checkout counter.

Three decades later, the bar code seems indispensable. Five billion items have their bar codes scanned each day; those little swatches of numerals and lines are so ubiquitous that they're practically invisible. Companies rely on bar-code data to keep their shelves stocked and their inventories lean. And yet, to hear those companies tell it, the bar code's expiration date may be nigh.

That's because a successor has emerged, a technology called radio-frequency identification (R.F.I.D.), which relies on a computer chip and can convey far more information than most bar codes. Integrated into the chip is a little antenna that transmits the information via radio waves. You may already be using R.F.I.D.—for example, if you have an EZ-Pass, which enables your car to zip through a toll booth without stopping. Farmers use R.F.I.D. tags to keep track of cattle. Manufacturers use them to track high-priced components. Mobil Speedpass customers use them to buy gas. But some of the biggest companies in the world have grander ambitions: they envision a future in which R.F.I.D.s are embedded in everything we buy—every can of soda, box of detergent, and pair of shoes. Products will be tracked continuously, from factory floor to checkout aisle. Checkout will take only seconds. There will be no more shoplifting or shipments that fall off trucks or items that are out of stock. Inventory will flow like water in a mountain stream. Or so the story goes.

Companies like the idea of R.F.I.D. because, even in this technology-rich economy, making and selling stuff is harder than it ought to be. In a typical store, eight per cent of the items are out of stock—at any moment thousands of products that customers want are piled up in back rooms or warehouses. In economics textbooks, supply flows in a smooth and orderly fashion, but in the real world it's often a panicky mess of misplaced inventory and mistimed forecasts.

In the sixties, a group of researchers at M.I.T. devised a simulation called the beer game. Participants play one of four roles: the brewer, the distributor, the wholesaler, or the retailer. (No one, sadly, gets to be the customer.) The retailer, who knows how much beer has been consumed in a given week, orders from the wholesaler, who orders from the distributor, who orders from the brewer. The goal is for everyone to have enough beer to satisfy demand but not so much that it can't all be sold. Sounds easy enough. In fact, soon after the game starts, chaos erupts. Instead of a nice, even flow of beer, you get wild oscillations; the players veer from having too much beer to too little, and back again.



The beer game demonstrates what's often called the "bullwhip effect," whereby a small change at one end of the supply chain—a minor spike in demand for Sam Adams—causes much bigger changes at the other. Manufacturers and distributors often have only a dim idea of what consumers are buying; the uncertainty gives rise to overreaction. A classic example comes from Procter & Gamble's experience in the diaper business. The demand for diapers stays pretty constant, since the number of babies doesn't change much from month to month. But P. & G. found that even small variations in the number of diapers sold by retailers led to wild swings in the number of diapers that it was making and that distributors had on hand.

The bullwhip effect is a result of bad information. So an obvious solution is to make the information better—to let everyone know what's happening as it's happening. That's where R.F.I.D. comes in. Bar codes are cumbersome and passive: they won't tell you anything unless you scan them by hand. An R.F.I.D. tag can effectively act on its own. Promoters of the new technology—most notably the Cambridge-based Auto-I.D. Center, a partnership of five research universities and almost a hundred major companies—predict that a store's products will keep up a constant chatter ("Hey, I'm expiring over here!" the carton of milk will say) and let distributors know when stock is getting low. The data will be collected online instantaneously; the result is what's known, in *Business 2.0*-speak, as "instant supply-chain visibility."

Before any of this can happen, R.F.I.D. technology needs to get a lot cheaper, and its boosters need to assuage the privacy concerns of people who are leery of a little chip that could enable someone to track every bottle of pills in their medicine cabinet. (The Auto-I.D. Center insists that tags will be "killed" at the checkout counter, as clothing sensors are.) Earlier this year, though, Wal-Mart announced that it was requiring its top hundred suppliers to use R.F.I.D.s on their supply pallets by 2005. And where Wal-Mart goes, just about everybody soon follows. As it happens, the bar code became a mainstream success only after Wal-Mart adopted it, in 1980.

Wal-Mart is already the world's most efficient retailer. It may know more about what's on its shelves, and keep its supply chain running more smoothly, than any big chain in the world. But, like every other company these days, it is under constant pressure to become more productive. For all its power, Wal-Mart makes less than four cents on every dollar of sales. Major supermarkets make less than two cents. So even if R.F.I.D. will save only a few cents on each item sold, it's an innovation that Wal-Mart and its competitors have to have. A few pennies here and a few pennies there, and pretty soon you're talking about real money.

—*James Surowiecki*

ARNOLD ROTH

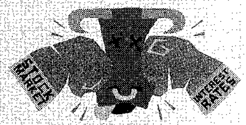
Richard L. Kauffman, Vice Chairman of Institutional Securities

Assets & liabilities:

A mismatch not made in heaven.

If interest rates and stock market returns remain low – and the question is how low – there's a big problem looming for the global economy. Without resorting to melodrama, this apparently prosaic issue could represent one of the biggest policy challenges of the next generation.

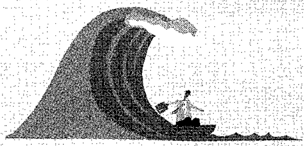
The Fed and other central banks have lowered interest rates to encourage consumers to spend and businesses to invest to stimulate the economy. But we must look at the other side of the ledger: as rates go down, the value of fixed liabilities goes up. For some years now, investors have increased their debt load assuming that their investment returns would provide the necessary funds to repay the loans. Put differently, you are going to sleep a lot easier if you owe $10,000 in ten years if you are investing your money at 10% than if you are earning 2%.



The combination of low interest rates and low stock market returns creates a double whammy: the degree of liabilities goes up and the value of assets is inadequate to generate enough returns to service the liabilities. Liabilities for our society are everywhere: people need to retire, to put their children through school, to purchase homes. And then there are the liabilities that are held by banks and insurance companies, by governments and by individual investors, such as margin and mortgage debt.

Bluntly stated, if the current combination of low interest rates and low returns continues, there's a tidal wave of asset-liability mismatch headed our way. In the US, many households relied on 401(k) stock accounts and rising home prices as a source of savings and relied on these savings to take on increasing amounts of debt. Credit card debt has tripled in the last decade, now amounting to over 15% of household income. With this level of debt and a reduction in stock prices, it is no wonder that observers question whether consumers can spend the economy out of recession.

How to get out of the asset-liability "mismess"? The best answer, of course, is if government stimulus succeeds and returns increase. But we must ask the question, what if such medicine fails to work? There are other answers, some of which are not pretty: *Retire later.* Or aren't people entitled to retire, or must they work until death? *Save more.* In the short term, increases in savings will come from reducing consumption and with it economic growth. But will we be the Depression Generation Redux telling our grandchildren to be thrifty? Or *greater government intervention.* If markets don't seem to work and individuals can't save enough, will government enforce savings? And how will that be funded?



Asset-liability mismatch. It is a prosaic term. But it could be a big problem you'll be hearing more about.

Richard L. Kauffman
Vice Chairman of Institutional Securities

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ANNALS OF EXPLORATION

WHAT GALILEO SAW

NASA's troubled mission to Jupiter, and its triumph.

BY MICHAEL BENSON

For the past eight years, the vintage spacecraft known as the Galileo Orbiter has been tracing a complex path between Jupiter's four large moons. During this time, it has made detailed scientific observations and taken thousands of high-resolution photographs, beaming them to Earth, half a billion miles away. On September 21st, Galileo's extended tour of Jupiter's satellites will end, and it will hurtle directly toward the immense banded clouds and spinning storms of the largest planet in the solar system.

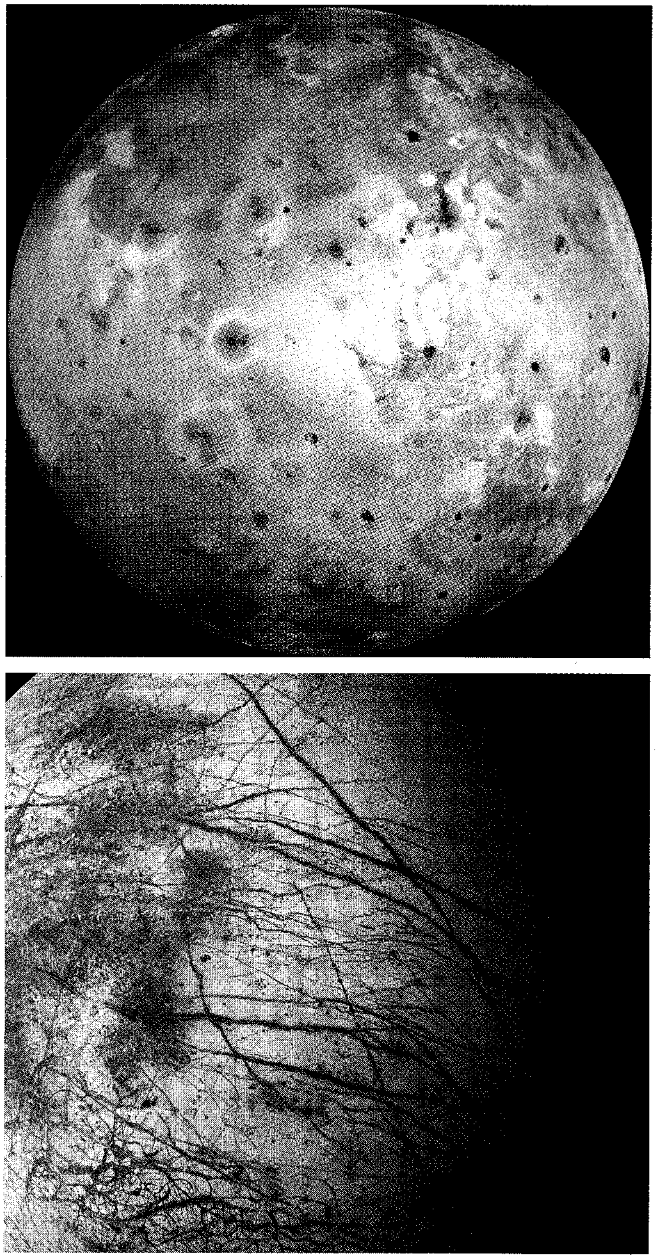
As the orbiter plummets toward Jupiter's atmosphere, several of its observational instruments will send a live transmission to Earth, and this data stream could prove highly illuminating. Galileo may be able to confirm the existence of a rocky ring close to the planet—a feature that has long been suspected. Other instruments will convey information about the density and composition of the mysterious, smokelike "gossamer rings" suspended inside the orbit of Amalthea, a moonlet near Jupiter.

At 2:57 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, Galileo will be travelling at a speed of thirty miles per second, and its boxy octagonal frame will start glowing red. Seconds later, it will be white-hot. By 3 P.M., many of its eighty-five thousand components will have separated from each other, and will continue to break up, becoming a hail of rapidly liquefying shrapnel. By the time the spacecraft's remains are three hundred miles inside Jupiter's atmosphere, where the temperature is twelve hundred degrees, all its aluminum components will have vaporized. At six hundred miles, its titanium parts will disintegrate. Jupiter is a gaseous planet, with a radius of forty-four thousand miles—big enough to contain all the other planets and moons of the solar system—and Galileo will have hardly penetrated its outermost atmospheric layer. Having just crossed Jupiter's threshold, it will vanish, leaving no clues of its earthly origin or its complicated mission.

Obliteration is precisely what NASA intends for the spacecraft. The reason is that Galileo may still harbor some signs of life on Earth: microorganisms that have survived since its launch from the Kennedy Space Center, in Florida, in 1989. If the orbiter were left to circle Jupiter after running out of propellant (barring an intervention, this would likely happen within a year), it might eventually crash into Europa, one of Jupiter's large moons. In 1996, Galileo conducted the first of eight close flybys of Europa, producing breathtaking pictures of its surface, which suggested that the moon has an immense ocean hidden beneath its frozen crust. These images have led to vociferous scientific debate about the prospects for life there; as a result, NASA officials decided that it was necessary to avoid the possibility of seeding Europa with alien life-forms. And so the craft has been programmed to commit suicide, guaranteeing a fiery, spectacular end to one of the most ambitious, tortured, and revelatory missions in the history of space exploration.

Although Europa wasn't the only target of Galileo's camera during its years in space, its pictures of this weirdly fissured sphere—many of which show icebergs that apparently rafted into new positions before being refrozen into the moon's ice crust—produced euphoria among planetary scientists in the late nineties. They now speculate that Europa's global ocean may be more than thirty miles deep, which would mean that the moon has considerably more water than Earth. As Richard Terrile, a member of the NASA division that designed Galileo, has said, "How often is an ocean discovered? The last one was the Pacific, by Balboa, and that was five hundred years ago."

The orbiter also conducted forty flybys of planets and moons, far more than any other spacecraft. It was the first to swing close to an asteroid; the first to orbit one of the outer planets; the first to document fire fountains erupting from the surface of Jupiter's volcanic moon, Io; and the first to fly through a plume from Io, a lurid yellow-orange sphere with an estimated three hundred volcanoes erupting at any given time. In July, 1994, Galileo provided direct observation of fragments of the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet slamming into Jupiter; these collisions produced explosions more powerful than that of the largest H-bomb.



Two of Jupiter's large moons: Io, above, and Europa.

TOP: COURTESY NASA/JPL/CAL TECH; BOTTOM: MICHAEL BENSON/KINETIKON PICTURES

In recent years, when the mission was directed from Earth by a skeleton crew on a low budget and had absorbed more than four times as much of Jupiter's fierce radiation field as it had been designed to withstand, Galileo's systems faltered frequently, but it continued to make discoveries. Last November, for example, its scanner registered the presence of up to nine tiny moons orbiting close to Jupiter. In June, 2000, it oddly failed to recognize the bright star cluster Delta Velorium, which flickers in Vela, a constellation that can be seen in the Southern Hemisphere. Subsequent observations from Earth confirmed that this group of five stars contains a dual-sun system, with one of its component parts periodically eclipsing the other, resulting in the variable light output that puzzled the spacecraft's instrument. Galileo thus became the first interplanetary space mission ever to make an interstellar discovery.

Conceived by NASA in the early seventies, Galileo had a rocky beginning; its early history was marked by a series of delays. Its entire flight plan had to be redesigned five times, both because its technical specifications kept changing and because the positions of the planets shifted between launch dates. It was trucked back and forth between California and Florida, and was disassembled, cleaned, stored, and then reassembled. Although the orbiter was an extremely sophisticated piece of technology for the seventies, when it finally went into space, in 1989, many of its systems were already out of date. (Its main processors were rebuilt versions of the RCA 1802 chip, which was used to run primitive video games like Pong.)

Galileo's most critical pre-launch problem was a woefully underpowered solid-fuel booster that could barely propel the craft out of Earth's orbit. It was able to get as far as Mars or Venus, but reaching the outer planets appeared to be impossible. Galileo had been specifically designed for shuttle deployment; after the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger in January, 1986, a newly safety-conscious NASA had decided that the orbiter's original, liquid-fuelled booster—which was more powerful but also potentially more dangerous than a solid-fuel device—couldn't be lofted alongside the shuttle's human cargo. The spacecraft seemed to be on the verge of a one-way trip to the Smithsonian.

Trajectory specialists at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory set to work, attempting to figure out how to get Galileo to Jupiter with what amounted to a lawnmower engine under the hood. The man who eventually solved this puzzle was Roger Diehl.

I spoke with Diehl, who still works at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, in July. He told me that his first idea was to get the spacecraft to Mars, and then use that planet's gravity to hurl it all the way to Jupiter. "I would go to bed at night, and my wife said she could even hear me talking about trajectories in my sleep," he recalled. But he eventually realized that because Mars had swung from its ideal position during one of Galileo's launch delays, that approach wouldn't work. "It turns out that Mars is so small that if you go out of your way to fly by Mars to get a gravity assist you usually won't get a benefit," Diehl said. "So then I said, 'Well, let's launch to Venus.' "

This was hardly an obvious solution. Venus is in the inner solar system, and Jupiter is very far in the opposite direction. Moreover, this approach posed a significant thermal problem: Galileo had not been designed to travel closer to the sun before heading toward the frigid space around Jupiter. "If anyone had talked to a spacecraft person, there would have been a reluctance. They would have said, 'No, don't do that,' " Diehl said, laughing.

But he came up with a daring new flight plan anyway. Galileo would fly to Venus, curve back, swing around the Earth, then fly around Earth a *second* time exactly two years later; this trajectory would act like a slingshot, flinging Galileo all the way to Jupiter. Diehl realized that such a course would take several more

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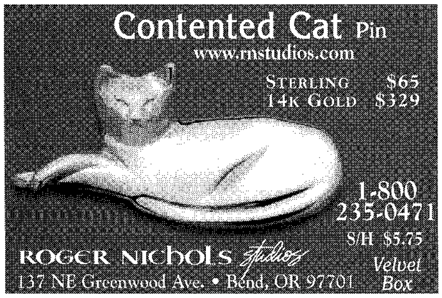

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years than the original plan, but he was undeterred. "I said to myself, 'I'm going to think of the problem as doing a tour of the planets of the solar system, with the goal of getting to Jupiter,'" he recalled. "I didn't care how many years it would take."

Diehl presented his boss, Bob Mitchell, with the unlikely scheme in August of 1986. Mitchell approved the concept, which was dubbed VEEGA, for "Venus Earth Earth Gravity Assist." Within days, Jet Propulsion Laboratory designers came up with a way to save Galileo from the harsh temperatures near Venus: they could attach lightweight, strategically placed sun shields that would protect it from intense heat.

In the next several months, another scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Lou D'Amario, substantially improved Diehl's initial concept; for example, he expanded Galileo's itinerary, modifying its trajectory to make it fly past two asteroids. In the end, the VEEGA approach would require six years to propel the spacecraft to Jupiter, double the flight time of Galileo's original plan.

Diehl considers his revision of Galileo's trajectory, which effectively saved the mission, the highlight of his career. "My car license plate says 'VEEGA,'" Diehl said. "Every morning, I go out and I see the word."

Galileo was successfully deployed from the space shuttle Atlantis on October 18, 1989, seven years after its original launch date. It spent the next year making its detour to Venus. In December, 1990, Galileo began its "Earth-1" maneuver: the first Earth flyby. This happened to coincide with the buildup to the first Gulf War. NASA had to inform the North American Aerospace Defense Command that the blip that would appear on its radar screens on December 8th—an incredibly fast-moving object that might well seem to originate from the Middle East—was not an enemy missile but a robotic spacecraft coming from Venus.

Throughout the entire first part of its journey into space, Galileo's umbrella-shaped high-gain antenna, intended to be its main communications link to the Earth from Jupiter, had remained snugly folded at one end of the craft. It was the largest such device ever to have been sent out of Earth's orbit. The plan was to deploy it only after the orbiter had receded far enough from the sun—because it, too, had originally been designed to operate in the bitter-cold temperatures of the outer solar system. In the meantime, the spacecraft would rely on a smaller, much slower antenna that was intended to be used only close to Earth.

In April, 1991, when Galileo was nearing the cooler climes of the asteroid belt, which is between Mars and Jupiter, the time had come to open the high-gain antenna and begin pulsing data toward Earth, at an optimal rate of a hundred and thirty-four kilobytes per second. Galileo was designed to have enough bandwidth to fire home one picture per minute, while also transmitting information from its other instruments.

But when the Jet Propulsion Laboratory finally ordered Galileo to open this key device, it stuck. Scientists running the mission were devastated: without a means of sending back high volumes of data, Galileo would be severely hobbled. Within a week of the antenna failure, two engineering teams were formed at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. One was dedicated to getting the high-gain antenna unstuck. The other had to figure out how to rescue the mission without the use of the antenna; it was made up primarily of telecommunications specialists from the Deep Space Network. This division often provided NASA with a "million-mile screwdriver"—that is, a way of fixing a spacecraft by sending radio signals from Earth.

Leslie Deutsch, then the head of research and development for the Deep Space Network, is a garrulous but precise mathematician. "This was a crisis," he recalled in a recent conversation. "I got together with a few people, and we did some brainstorming. First, we said, 'Suppose we don't change anything. What's the data rate going to be when we get to Jupiter, if we have to use this low-gain antenna?'" The answer was ten bits per second, which translated to about one picture a month—and then only if Galileo's ten other scientific instruments weren't in use. Such a data rate was pitifully inadequate; in space, complex phenomena must often be photographed many hundreds of times before they can be properly understood.

Instead of attempting to change the spacecraft's hardware, the Deep Space Network rescue squad began thinking about how it could improve Galileo's information-processing capabilities. There was one possibility: Galileo's fundamental software could be rewritten. To accomplish this feat, the onboard computer had to be powerful enough to handle the more advanced algorithms employed in the updated code. "The computer system on Galileo was ancient," Deutsch said. "So we looked into what kind of microprocessors were on board, and how much memory there was. And there was good news and bad news."

The bad news was that Galileo's computer processors were so old that their original designers would need to be brought out of retirement for consultation. The good news was that, shortly before being launched into space, Galileo had been outfitted with twice as many memory chips as its designers originally intended; engineers had been worried that they were vulnerable to damage by radiation absorbed during the long journey in space. But after nineteen months in flight all the orbiter's memory chips were still functioning, which allowed Deutsch's team to do something that had never been attempted: change all a spacecraft's software applications in midflight. Updating the software would enable the team to introduce advanced data-compression techniques, which would help make it possible for Galileo to send useful pictures and other valuable information from Jupiter over the low-gain antenna. Galileo would now be capable of sending more than two hundred pictures per month, along with other data. This rate was considerably slower than originally planned, and some of Galileo's objectives would have to be modified or abandoned. But the mission could still accomplish more than seventy per cent of its goals.

It took years, but by the time the orbiter completed its first sweep around Jupiter its software had been fully replaced. It was a move with unprecedented risks—"a complete brain transplant over a four-hundred-million-mile radio link," as one team paper put it—and any error could have meant losing the spacecraft. But the update was necessary, and the code transfer was flawless.

One problem remained: Galileo could collect information much faster than it could send it back. Its designers needed to find a way to store images, so that they could be slowly transmitted back to Earth. The orbiter, it turned out, had a tape recorder on board. Manufactured by the Odetics Corporation, in California, it was practically indistinguishable from the reel-to-reel recorders that were attached to the higher-end stereo systems of the sixties and seventies. Though the machine was practically obsolete, it became one of Galileo's most important features.

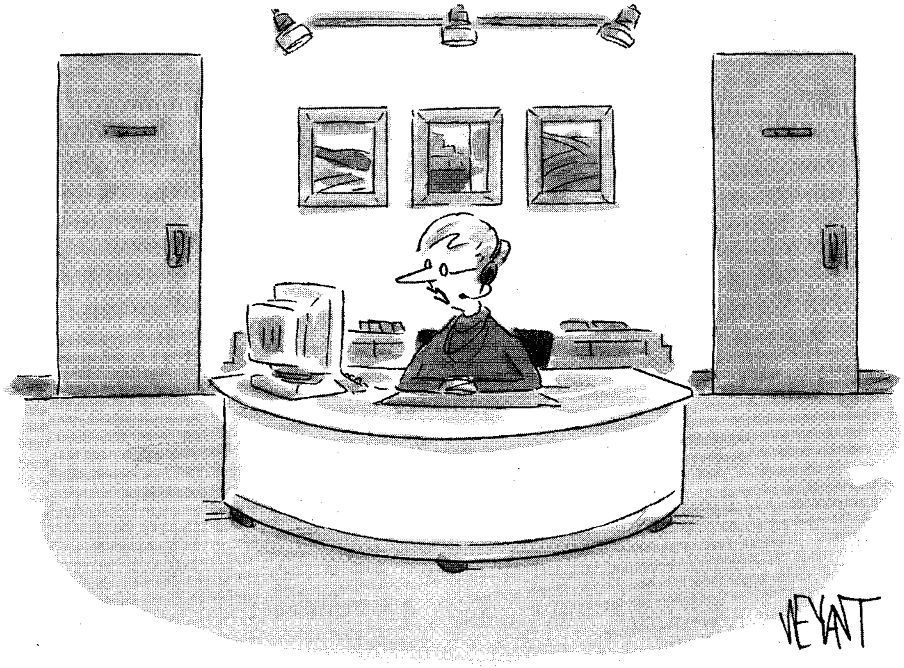
The recorder had been incorporated into the orbiter's design for one reason: to back up data from its atmospheric probe, which was scheduled to tunnel into Jupiter's clouds in 1995, when Galileo arrived at the planet's doorstep. This snub-nosed device would release its heat shield, deploy a parachute, and transmit information about Jupiter's atmosphere back to the orbiter as it sank into oblivion. The whole procedure was supposed to unfold over the course of an hour. During that time, the probe's findings would be relayed from Galileo back to Earth.

After the failure of the high-gain antenna, however, the tape recorder became a critical instrument. Galileo's handlers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory realized that it would be necessary to store all the incoming images and other scientific data gathered by its instruments during its flybys of Jupiter's moons. That information could then be fed into Galileo's computers (using the new data-compression software) and slowly transmitted back to Earth during the months-long lulls when the craft was travelling between Jupiter's moons.

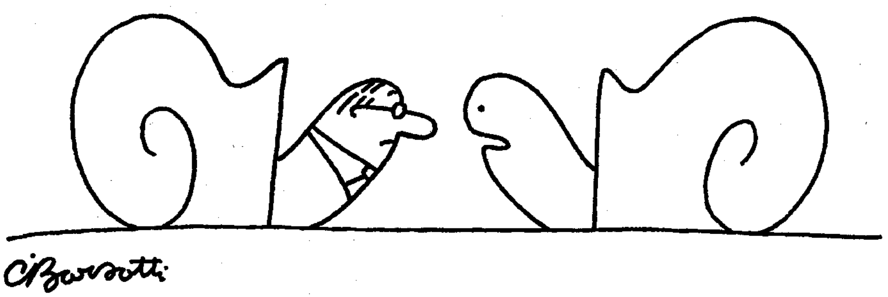
The magnetic tape spooled in Galileo's tape recorder became a thread on which the mission's destiny hung. The entire system had been jerry-rigged, but it worked. Galileo began slowly transmitting spectacular images of Jupiter and its moons to Earth, where an upgraded antenna system picked up the spacecraft's slow, faint signals.

In March, 1996, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory team assigned the task of fixing the jammed antenna finally gave up. One analysis attributes the malfunction to a design flaw that was exacerbated by vibrations sustained when the antenna was hauled repeatedly between Florida and California during the years of launch delays.

Even before the scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory finished updating Galileo's software, the orbiter was not completely useless. In October, 1991, it took the first high-resolution images of an asteroid. Because the process of downloading photographs was so slow, it was instructed to send them back in fragments. Paul Geissler, a planetary geologist then at the University of Arizona's Lunar and Planetary Laboratory, was one of the few researchers allowed to view them as they came in, bit by bit. "It was wonderful—we were locked into a room and sworn to si-



"I'm sorry, we don't have anyone named Mr. Peterson working in this office. Would you care to hold until we do?"



"Sorry, you're overqualified."

• •

lence," Geissler said. "Because we didn't have the high-gain antenna, the data came in as what we call 'jail-bars.' Galileo would send down a line, and then skip twenty lines, then send down another line, and then skip twenty lines and send down another line, and the issue was, is the asteroid in the frame at all, and should we use our precious bits to send down this frame or should we save it for the next frame?"

Geissler recalled the moment when his team realized that there was a tiny moon orbiting the asteroid. "In one of these jail-bars you could see Ida, and then it dropped off back into space again, and then there was another little blip. That's all we had. These particular jail-bars had three lines and then skipped a bunch, and this blip was in all three of the lines, so we were dead certain that it wasn't a cosmic-ray hit or anything like that. We knew there was something there. But we waited until another instrument on Galileo had a confirmation of it, and then we announced it."

Although astronomers had long believed that some asteroids have moonlets, this was hard proof. It was also a reassuring illustration of what could still be achieved by Galileo, even in its extremely compromised state.

I asked Geissler, one of the leading image processors among planetary scientists, what it was like to see such unprecedented pictures before anyone else. He told me a story about the first complete shots of Ida, which had trickled in slowly, over a period of months in early 1994. "We had gotten two pictures of Ida up close, from different perspectives," he said. "As the spacecraft flew past the asteroid, it snapped a picture, at high resolution, and then it flew a little bit farther and then snapped another picture of the same region." Geissler realized that this separation allowed for the creation of a stereo image, which, when viewed properly, can give an object vivid three-dimensional form. "So I processed those pictures, and shot negatives of them, and brought them home—that was late on a Friday," he told me. "I had a darkroom at home, and later that night I made eight-by-tens of these two, and I had pinched a stereoscope from work. I popped in these two wonderful eight-by-tens and became the first human being to see a stereo image of an asteroid at high resolution!" Geissler chuckled. "That entire weekend, anyone who came close to my door was dragged over—'Look at this!' You know, the mailman, the babysitter. That was really a thrill."

For decades, scientists have known that three of Jupiter's four large moons have high concentrations of frozen water. But only the hardiest optimists among them dared to speculate that liquid water could exist that far from the Sun. Europa's average surface temperature is estimated to be two hundred and sixty degrees below zero.

In 1979, the twin Voyager space probes flew past Jupiter at approximately ten times the speed of a rifle bullet. The closest they got to Europa was about a hundred thousand miles; Galileo has veered to within a hundred and twenty-four miles of the moon. Despite being so far away, the Voyager probes compiled a photographic record suggesting—indirectly—that Europa might be warmer below its icy surface. The most obvious clue was to be found on images of Io, Jupiter's innermost large moon. Firmly gripped by the tidal pull of its parent planet's gravity, yet yanked the other way by the shifting gravitational fields of two of its three sister moons, Io produces seemingly endless chains of active volcanoes. At three thousand degrees, they are far hotter at their source than any volcano on Earth. Io is the most volcanic object in the solar system; the mere proximity of such an excitable object to Europa suddenly rendered the idea of subsurface water more imaginable. If such active volcanism was present on Io, why couldn't there be similar eruptions on Europa's seabed?

The other Voyager-era clue was more subtle and mysterious. Long, looping chains of scalloped cracks snake across large spans of Europa's surface. These unusual patterns, which extend for hundreds of miles across the crystalline topography encircling the moon's poles, were already clearly visible in the Voyager images. In 1996, Galileo began taking highly detailed photographs of Europa. Scientists concluded with excitement that the fissures on Europa—which were dubbed "arcuate ridges"—were unique in the solar system.

Meanwhile, a handful of planetary geologists struggled to sort out what the curved lines on Europa's surface signified. One of them was Randy Tufts, a geologist at the University of Arizona. Tufts had been fascinated by those eerie ridges even before Galileo reached Jupiter. In a conversation I had with him a few years ago, he recalled that in the early nineties he had printed multiple copies of the low-resolution Voyager pictures and handed them out to his nonscientist friends—hoping that one of them might miraculously intuit the cause of the surface cracks. He had even taken the pictures to a glassblowing studio in downtown Tucson and asked the workers there if they had ever seen similar patterns. (They hadn't.) "I was just casting about for any kind of analogue," he told me.

In 1998, Tufts discovered an immense, gently curved fault line in the southern hemisphere of Europa. Galileo photographs revealed that the crack, which was subsequently named the Astypalaea Linea, extends about six hundred miles, which is comparable to the San Andreas Fault. This feature offered clear evidence that parts of Europa's crust were slowly moving—perhaps even floating.

That summer, it occurred to Tufts that the curvature exhibited by both the Astypalaea Linea and the arcuate ridges could be caused by the immense gravitational pull of Jupiter, which has three hundred times the mass of Earth. The linked curves of the arcuate ridges, he realized, could be explained by the fact that Jupiter does not exert a consistent amount of force on Europa. The planet pulls more strongly on the moon when the two bodies happen to be closer together. "Since Europa's elliptical orbit sometimes takes it farther away from Jupiter, the amount of stretching it undergoes kind of relaxes a little bit," he explained. Cracks start propagating—but then, as Europa recedes from Jupiter, they stop. Because Europa's Jupiter-facing hemisphere rocks back and forth during each orbit, by the time the gravitational stresses pick up again they're oriented in a slightly different direction.

With the help of Greg Hoppa, an orbital-dynamics specialist, Tufts plotted the effect of these fluctuating force levels; he ended up with looping cracks that look just like the ones on Europa. That was quite a breakthrough, but the team's next insight was even more significant: the whole process couldn't happen without the existence of a large body of subsurface water to exert tidal pressure from below. Ice crusted on solid rock could never be affected so much. The tides on Europa are much higher than those on Earth, reaching almost a hundred feet; when Jupiter pulls these enormous subsurface bulges of water in its direction, Tufts concluded, the ice on the surface begins to crack.

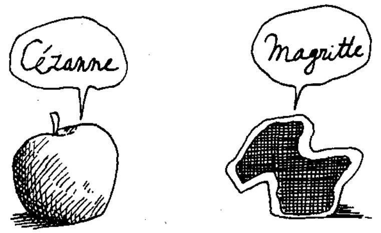
In the end, Tufts's insight is appealingly straightforward. By studying the elegant shapes on Europa's surface, he divined what lay beneath. "Later, I found myself sort of apologizing for its simplicity," he said. "And people said, 'Well, you know, some of the best ideas in science are very simple ones.' They're often so simple that everyone sees right through them." Tufts was excited by the idea that life might exist on Europa. "It always seemed to me that if we found life someplace else it would give us a vastly new perspective on existence," he told me. "And we would probably realize that we weren't quite so important as we thought we were." He frowned thoughtfully. "I mean, it might take us down a peg, which always could be useful."

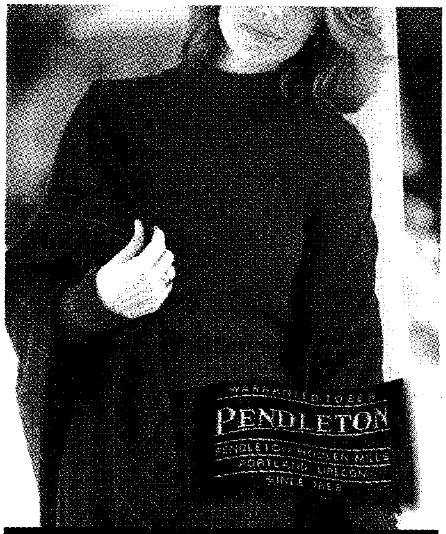
Randy Tufts died last year, at the age of fifty-three, from a bone-marrow disorder. Not long before his death, he was working with scientists on plans for an orbiter that would investigate Europa's ocean more closely. In 2002, the project was cancelled, owing to budget cuts.

In late July, I called Arthur C. Clarke at his home in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and asked him to comment on Galileo's impending death. Clarke has long been fascinated by Europa; it figures prominently in the sequels to "2001: A Space Odyssey." In particular, I wondered if he shared NASA's concern that if Galileo were to crash into the distant moon it could transfer microbes from Earth to Europa's ocean. Clarke didn't answer directly, instead suggesting that I read an old tale of his, "Before Eden," written in 1961. "It's all about the danger that we might contaminate new worlds," he said.

The story is about a scouting expedition to the South Pole of Venus, which is described as being "a hundred degrees hotter than Death Valley in midsummer." The expedition leaves behind a single human artifact—a bag of waste. It ends up contaminating a strange Venusian life-form that the expedition had discovered there, thus ending its evolution. I concluded that Clarke probably endorsed NASA's plan to destroy Galileo.

I spoke with Leslie Deutsch about his reaction to the decision, and he said he was initially angry, though he understood the rationale. Over the years, Deutsch admitted, he had become emotionally attached to the distant robot emissary, adding that this would be only the second time that NASA had deliberately destroyed a functioning spacecraft. When I asked Bill O'Neil, Galileo's long-serving project director and one of the key architects of the effort to save the mission, what his reaction had been when he'd heard of the decision, he mulled it over for a few days, then sent me an e-mail. Galileo's end would bring a personal sense of satisfaction at what had been achieved, he wrote. Still, he found it ironic that "Galileo Galilei only got house arrest by his sponsor the Roman Catholic Church for discovering things they didn't want to be true, whereas our Project Galileo gets a death sentence from NASA for its greatest discovery: the prospect of life on Europa." ♦

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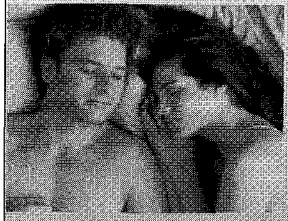

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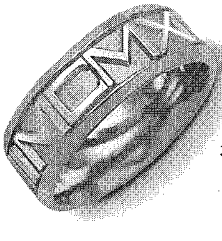

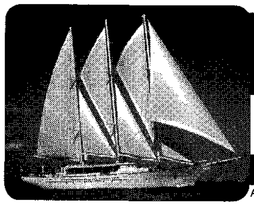

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF KITTY GAIL PARKER

BY PATRICIA MARX

June 6

Sea bream I lay out on platter goes bad before I am inspired. Robert says I should use frozen fish. Robert does not understand Painter's Block. He is not an artist.

June 7

On wearing glasses while painting: Is this cheating?

June 15

Father's clients give him V.I.P. tickets to MOMA opening and he gives them to me. I refuse to go on principle. Art is for the masses. Also: massage at 8:30. Robert goes anyway.

June 17

Fish man at Citarella says sea bream is no longer in season but halibut is nice.

June 18

QUERY: Goya painted sea bream ("Still-Life with Golden Bream"). Is it still considered an homage if I use halibut?

June 19

Father says I should think about paying off my business-school loan, but I am not of the "for-profit" world anymore.

June 21

Robert says he found MOMA exhibit so moving he wants to become an artist on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when he doesn't teach physical therapy. He is thinking of making Staple Art—in other words, stapling staples onto a piece of paper, canvas; or even fabric to create an image. Robert says the possibilities are probably endless, since he is pretty sure they make staples in many sizes.

June 23

QUERY: Does a still-life cease to be when it moves?

June 24

Robert says he came up with the idea of Staple Art when he saw the way Matisse's shapes stood out against the background in his *papiers découpés*. I explain to Robert that he is talking about "figure and ground" and we have a lively intellectual debate. How exciting to toss around ideas about theory and praxis with a fellow-artist!

June 25

Robert is moving out.

June 26

QUERY: Robert had a nose job in high school. Is it "true" to paint him with a fixed nose?

June 27

Mother says she believes in my art but maybe I should work as a ratings analyst with Uncle Hank at the We Channel. She says many artists do other things. Jeff Koons traded cotton on the commodities exchange.

July 10

I have not painted for three months and five days. They say the creative process always goes on, so it looks like I am getting some work done after all.

July 12

Robert says that living alone has been a positive influence on his work.

July 22

QUERY: Can you have a "vision" if your eyes are closed?

July 29

Ran into Robert in front of "Vétheuil in Winter" at the Frick. He feels Monet is too painterly. Isn't that the point?

August 2

Gustave Courbet was painting a seascape when a solar eclipse darkened the sky. Though he knew that staying outdoors put him at risk of blindness, he kept painting because artistic instinct murmured to him that the cloud wafting overhead was extraordinary and he wanted to capture it on canvas. I hope I will be just as brave if I am ever confronted with anything like that.

August 5

Things to strive for:

1. Reach goal of three paintings a day.
2. Get Guggenheim Fellowship to study light in Paris.
3. Find out how to remove oil paint from Balenciaga cargo pants.

August 8

Robert wins the New Artist Competition at the National Academy of Design. The museum will exhibit his piece "Doomed Trout." His technique shows strong development—he used fishhooks instead of staples.

August 11

Mother says she will pay me to do a painting of the family for Father's birthday, but I am not into the concept of the portrait. Besides, I cannot paint a subject that does not interest me.

August 13

A confession: I would like to achieve immortality through my art, but I want to know it before I die.

August 14

Barneys commissions three pieces of Staple Art from Robert to hang in Housewares. How will Robert's commercial success affect our relationship? Are the Artist and the Artisan viable as a couple?

August 15

Robert says he never loved me. Is he jealous of my art? Or my integrity? He says I should take the job at the We Channel. I tell him he can still store some of his stuff here.

August 19

I may have developed a technique for painting using only water, no paint. It is a simple idea, but aren't those the best?

August 22

QUERY: How many hours of suffering a day are required to further one's art? Two? ♦

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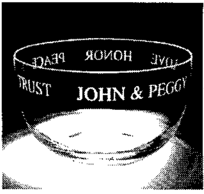
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ANNALS OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

THE LAST MEOW

Organ transplants, chemotherapy, root canal—how far would you go for a pet?

BY BURKHARD BILGER

She arrived in Manhattan looking ravaged and ravishing, like a queen of silent film with one last swoon left in her. Her sleek ermine coat was matted and worn, her long neck so weak that it drooped to her chest. For months she had managed to hide her condition, eating full meals yet still losing weight. Now she was days away from dying, but her pale-green eyes didn't show it.

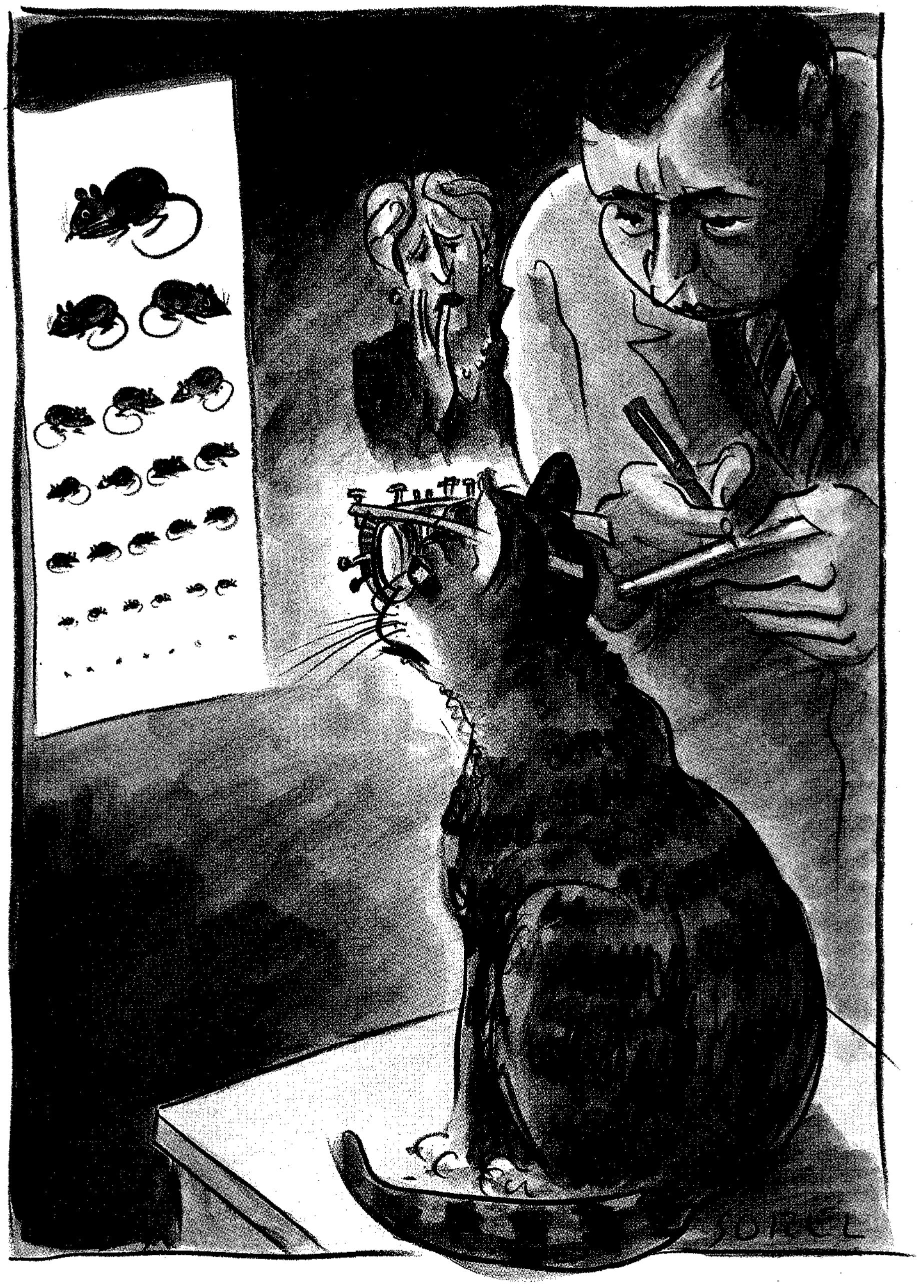
Shawn Levering glanced down at his cat, Lady, then cast a bewildered look around the waiting room of the Animal Medical Center, on New York's Upper East Side. He had on scuffed bluejeans and a faded Wheels of Time T-shirt, silk-screened with a picture of a custom Cadillac. His face was freckled and ruddy, his forearms thickly cabled. Standing in the middle of the room, his feet spread wide, he had the specific gravity of a man who knows exactly where to reach for his tools. Back home, in Wilmington, Delaware, Levering liked to work on old cars, taking rusted wrecks and transforming them into street rods. But this cat and her problems, and the city to which he'd been compelled to take her, were beyond him. "This place is crazy," he said. "The taxi-drivers are like demolition experts. I just hope we can find our way out again."

Beside him, the veterinarian, Cathy Langston, nodded, her eyes on Lady. The cat was in the throes of chronic renal failure, she said. Her kidneys weren't filtering out the toxins in her blood anymore. "I think she would definitely benefit from dialysis. It won't make her kidneys better, but it will buy her time to see if she's a good candidate for a transplant." There were risks: clotting, internal bleeding, dangerous drops in blood pressure. More than a quarter of Lady's blood would be taken out of her body each time and filtered artificially. If the dialysis was done too quickly, it could cause seizures or even a coma, but the alternative was certain death. "I've got the whole team on standby," Langston said. "We can whisk her back, put in a catheter, and take a biopsy today. If she passes all the tests, we could have her ready for transplant by next week."

Like many of the center's eighty-five veterinarians, Langston is a specialist. "Everyone has to have a passion, and the kidneys are mine," she says. But such passions are relatively new in her field. Little more than twenty years ago, all vets were general practitioners, and neutering and spaying were among the most elaborate procedures they performed. Now the American Veterinary Medical Association has more than seven thousand specialists in thirty-nine fields, including cardiology, radiology, ophthalmology, and oncology. As the director of the center's quarter-million-dollar kidney unit, Langston usually has one or two patients in dialysis at any given time. Some owners have chartered planes for their animals, then stayed at nearby hotels during the treatment. But not all her clients are wealthy.

"We're looking at spending a thousand dollars in the next twenty-four hours and between three and four thousand in the next week," Langston told Levering. If the dialysis was successful, Lady would have to be transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where her condition was first diagnosed. (The university's veterinary hospital didn't yet have a dialysis unit, but its vets were more experienced in performing transplants, and Lady was a high-risk patient.) The total cost would be more than fifteen thousand dollars.

Levering sighed and shook his head. Lady was already anemic, asthmatic, and congenitally blind. She had been born on the streets of Wilmington four years earlier, and dropped at a local animal clinic at the age of six months. Soon after Levering and his wife adopted her, she became allergic to her own tooth enamel. "That was a weird thing," Levering said. "Never heard of that before." But he had willingly paid four hundred



Each time vets introduce a new procedure, they raise the value of their patients.

EDWARD SOREL

dollars to have all her teeth pulled. In retrospect, it seemed like a bargain.

"I don't know. If it was up to me, I might not go through with it," he said. He was recovering from a bout of Lyme disease and from carpal tunnel syndrome, and he had recently had sinus surgery. His wife had been laid up for three years with back injuries, and was only now going back to work. If they were willing to go this far for a cat, it was partly out of a sense of shared misfortune. But mostly it was a matter of love. "My wife is totally wiped out about this," he said.

A nurse in blue scrubs came over and carefully took the cat from Levering. As she turned to go, he reached over and laid his hand on Lady's head. Then he watched as she was borne away in the nurse's arms, through a pair of swinging doors, and into another world.

The Animal Medical Center and the University of Pennsylvania veterinary hospital are the Mayo Clinic and the Mass General of their field. One is perhaps the world's largest private animal hospital; the other is the world's largest university veterinary center. The A.M.C. occupies an eight-story concrete tower at the corner of Sixty-second Street and York Avenue, overlooking the East River, and in an average year admits sixty-five thousand patients. The center has its own oncology, dentistry, and dermatology departments, as well as the usual surgery, emergency, and recovery wards. To insure that there is a steady supply of blood flowing to surgical patients, it keeps thirteen donor greyhounds, twenty-six donor cats (some of them inherited from an elderly woman who kept seventy in her apartment), and three donor ferrets. The ferrets are called Larry, Mo, and Curly.

New Yorkers, with their dog-averse landlords, have an unusual number and variety of exotic pets. Throughout the years, the city has been swept by vogues for potbellied pigs, Day-Glo anole lizards, and sugar gliders—a nectar-eating Australian marsupial. Most owners don't really know how to care for these animals (sugar gliders, for instance, are prone to osteoporosis in captivity), so the A.M.C. sees a steady circus parade of patients. On a recent day, the exotics unit treated a ferret with a hair ball, an anorexic bearded dragon, a pigeon with a fracture, two wild Canada geese that had got tangled in fishing line, a four-year-old guinea pig awaiting a five-thousand-dollar surgery on a ureteral stone, and a hummingbird with a broken wing. Two X-rays hung on a light board on a wall in the corridor. One was of a duck called Nip-Nip, who had swallowed a metallic object. The other showed a long, elegant spine strung with eight perfect ovals: a corn snake with a clutch of eggs stuck in her birth canal.

In 1910, when the A.M.C. was founded, animal welfare was a relative term. Officers with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals carried guns with which to dispatch horses, several hundred of which collapsed from heat and exhaustion in the city every summer. It was considered unladylike to bear firearms, so the women's auxiliary to the A.S.P.C.A. founded the New York Women's League for Animals, and opened a clinic. Situated on the Lower East Side, the clinic was devoted to the city's strays and to the pets of poor immigrants, and funded by charitable donations. Its first patient, carried across the Brooklyn Bridge by a young girl, was a cat whose tail had been caught in a door.

In 1962, when the clinic moved to the Upper East Side, veterinarians were still a utilitarian breed and more than ninety per cent of them were men. Much of their work was of the kind made famous by James Herriot in “All Creatures Great and Small”: dosing sheep, midwifing cattle. Then, gradually, women began to enter vet schools. By 1975, they represented half of all students; by 2000, nearly three-quarters—and most of them wanted to treat pets. Hospitals sold vets their outdated CAT scanners and MRI machines, making high-tech medicine more affordable. And, as the birth rate dropped, pets came to take the place of children in some families.

Between 1980 and 2001 alone, the number of dogs and cats in the United States grew from ninety-eight million to a hundred and thirty million. Two generations ago, fathers still gave their sons sacks of kittens to drown in the river. Today, according to a recent survey by the American Animal Hospital Association, sixty-three per cent of pet owners say “I love you” to their pets every day. Eighty-three per cent refer to themselves as their pet’s mom or dad.

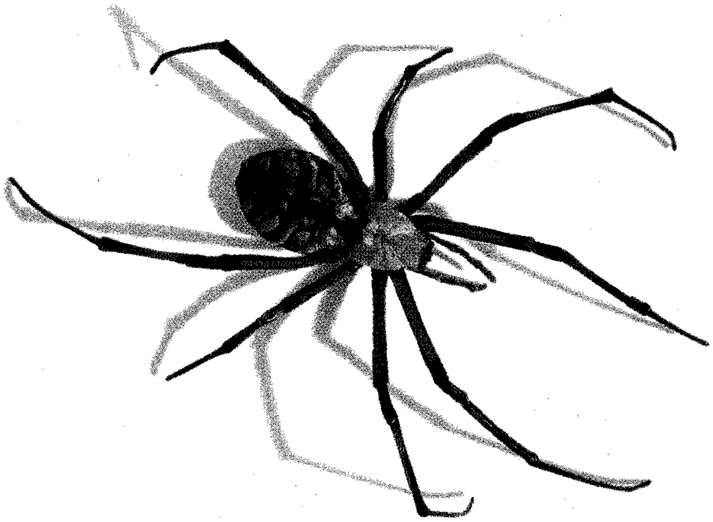
The current director of the A.M.C., Guy Pidgeon, has lived through both halves of this history. He was born on a farm in western Nebraska in 1947—though you’d never guess it from the stout, Friar Tuck-ish figure he now is—and went to the Colorado State University veterinary school, intent on becoming a country vet. “Then, at some point, I began to see an incredible dichotomy between agricultural and veterinary medicine,” he told me. “One was driven by economics, the other by emotion.” A sick cow could merit only a few shots before it was sent to the slaughterhouse; a sick hamster could motivate a six-hour surgery. To a veterinarian interested in cutting-edge medicine, the future lay with pets.

“My staff likes to tease me about the time my father came here for a visit,” Pidgeon said. “He’s eighty-six now and still lives on the farm. He tries to maintain a sense of humor about what I do, but he doesn’t really understand it.” The poodles getting root canals, the rabbits in radiation wards, were strange enough; but the crowning absurdity was the sight of two prairie dogs in the intensive-care unit. Members of the latest exotic pet craze, they had contracted pneumonia and were having trouble breathing. “If you’re a farmer in Nebraska, you’ve been waging holy war against prairie dogs all your life,” Pidgeon said. “And here I was giving them oxygen therapy.”

Before I visited the A.M.C., I had a certain cartoonish image of its clientele: the dragon lady from Carnegie Hill kissing her lapdogs on the lips; the Wall Street power broker sending his wolfhounds to have their teeth cleaned. I thought of the German countess Carlotta Liebenstein, who in 1991 bequeathed her eighty-million-dollar estate to her dog Gunther. Of J. Paul Getty, who refused to return from Europe when his twelve-year-old son died of a brain tumor but had a vet flown in when his dog developed cancer. When the disease proved fatal, he spent three days weeping in the dog’s room.

Lady’s owners were different. Like

{ *Along came a spider and sat down beside her and enlightened Miss Muffet as to the many benefits of a strongly diversified portfolio.* }



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many of the rumpled, red-eyed people I sat with in the A.M.C. waiting room, they could scarcely afford their sympathies. Shawn Levering works with mentally disabled adults, finding them jobs and visiting them weekly at their workplaces. He recently turned forty and makes twenty-seven thousand dollars a year. His wife, Karen, who is thirty-four, is the caregiver for a disabled teenager and is earning a degree in child psychology. They live in a three-room apartment in a plain brick building on the outskirts of Wilmington. At night, trains rumble in and out of the nearby Saturn car factory, delivering parts, and you can hear the thrum of Interstate 95 half a mile away.

When I visited them at home, on a Wednesday evening, Lady was scheduled for a transplant the next morning. She had made it through the dialysis treatment at the A.M.C. and had been transferred to the University of Pennsylvania. Karen had been to Philadelphia that morning to see the kidney donor. The hospital maintains a pool of cats for the purpose, often taken from local shelters and research labs. The surgery seems to have no ill effect on the donor cats' health, and it solves the problem of having to put them to sleep: the owners of the transplantee have to agree to adopt the donor. In the Leverings' case, the new cat would bring their feline population to four.

As we talked, Jimmy, a fat brown tabby with a cream belly, slinked warily past Bogart, a scruffy white tom lounging on the couch. Karen had found Bogart starving in front of a 7-Eleven one night and brought him home, only to find that the cat was stone deaf and deeply irritable. The first time Shawn tried to pull Bogart and Jimmy apart, he was bitten so deeply that he had to go to the emergency room. The second time, he had to take a round of antibiotics and get a tetanus shot. Karen's asthma flared up so badly, with all the dander in the air, that she had to use her albuterol inhaler repeatedly. "But I really think my system has adjusted to them," she said.

Karen has strawberry-blond hair and a moon-shaped face unmarked by her relentless bad luck. When she met Shawn, in 1997, through a dating service on the local radio station, she was a teacher at a Christian school. A month before their wedding, her car was rear-ended when she stopped at a yield sign. Her injuries were serious enough to warrant visits to a chiropractor during her honeymoon, and they were compounded, three months later, when she was rear-ended again. With a fractured vertebra and several torn disks in her spine, she couldn't stand in front of a classroom anymore, so she stayed home, on constant medication. When she tried to start a family, she couldn't get pregnant.

"I don't know what I would have done without the cats," she said. "Shawn was working long hours, and the pain was so extreme sometimes that I would just go to the bathroom and cry." Lady seemed to sense her moods. She would leap onto the bed at night and nestle on her chest. Karen had studied enough

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"I try to focus all my sexual energy on sex."

psychology to suspect that her feelings for Lady were partly misplaced mothering instincts, but she also knew that relationships like theirs could have a particular intensity. In the early nineteen-seventies, for instance, the biologist Erika Friedmann, of Brooklyn College, studied how heart-attack patients respond to social support. Patients who had a dog or cat, she found, were more than four times as likely to survive a year after a heart attack than those who didn't have a pet.

Research like Friedmann's has since spawned its own scholarly journal, *Anthrozoos*, and a "prescribe-a-pet" movement has sprung up among some therapists. Three years ago, Karen Allen, a psychologist at the State University of New York at Buffalo, studied two groups of hypertensive stockbrokers from Wall Street. One group was given drugs and a pet, while the other received only drugs. Six months later, the brokers took a stress test. They were asked to appease a client who pretended to have just lost eighty-six thousand dollars, thanks to their advice. Everyone's blood pressure rose, but for those with pets it rose half as much. Allen later ran another series of tests on pet owners. This time, she had them perform stressful activities alone, in the presence of their pets, and in the presence of their spouses. The results were unequivocal: pets made people's blood pressure drop; spouses made it shoot up.

Sitting side by side on the love seat in their living room, Karen and Shawn could have passed for two of the pet lovers in Allen's study. Karen argued that her cats deserve "the respect of life." She described the prayer group that she belonged to at a Methodist church and said that the other members would be sending their blessings to Lady the next morning. Shawn reminded her that they were already in debt—"We've gone from getting by to barely scraping." He said the first time she mentioned a transplant he was tempted to have her sanity checked. The cats wound their way between them, filling the silences with their purring.

Late that night, Shawn and I took a drive through the deserted streets of Wilmington, past strip malls and sandwich shops to the garage where he works on his street rods. Inside, a 1940 Ford truck lay on blocks, its body sanded and primed, waiting for parts from the crippled car beside it. Shawn and his friend Eddie had bolted the truck's body to a Chevy S-10 frame. They had chopped five inches from the frame, dropped in a burly 305, and laid in a steering column and brakes from a 1987 Monte Carlo. Then the money ran out.

"Before Karen and I got married, I was hoping to have this car done in two years," Shawn said. He glanced around the garage and chuckled. No, he said, he wasn't imagining what fifteen thousand dollars could buy. He, too, had come to depend on Lady's company. "I can't say I haven't compared this transplant to a down payment on a house," he said. "But you can't go too far down that road. If Lady comes through this thing alive, I won't think about it twice."

I was reminded of the two trucks the next morning, in the operating room at the University of Pennsylvania. The donor cat, Jasper, was lying on one table, his kidney stripped out and strung from its blood vessels like an old transmission. Beside him, Lady, covered with surgical drapes, was awaiting her replacement part. An oxygenation monitor had been clipped to her tongue, an anesthesia tube was pumping Isoflurane gas down her throat, and nylon cords anchored her limbs to the corners of the table. As soon as one team of surgeons cut her open and located her renal blood vessels, aorta, and vena cava, another team would cut Jasper's kidney free. Then the transplant would begin.

Lillian Aronson, the head surgeon, strode in with her forearms scrubbed and dripping, her face set in an uneasy grin. She'd begun the day in good spirits, joining the nurses in the kidney chant they had made up: "K-I-D-N-E-Y, You can do it if you try! Kidney! Kidney! Kidney!" Then things began to go wrong. Every cat has two kidneys, though it needs only one to survive, but not every kidney is fit for a transplant. Jasper was Lady's second donor. The first donor, Jack, seemed to have an ideal kidney: a CT scan showed that it was neither too big nor too small, and that there was a single artery and vein servicing it. But when Aronson opened the cat up, she found a second artery tucked behind the first. This artery would have to be sacrificed in a transplant, depriving part of the organ of blood. Luckily, Jasper—Jack's littermate—was available for surgery, and his blood type was a match for Lady's.

"It's all very scary," Aronson said, putting on her surgical gloves. "I ought to just open up a bed-and-breakfast and hang a 'No Vacancy' sign." Aronson, who is thirty-six, has been transplanting kidneys for ten years. Though her success rate is high—ninety-four per cent of her patients leave the hospital, and more than half are alive after four years—the procedure still fills her with a pleasurable dread. The night before, I'd watched her practice in this room, sewing stitches into a sliced rubber glove. A cat's renal artery is only about two millimetres thick. To stitch it to another artery of the same size, Aronson has to use an enormous surgical microscope suspended above the patient's open belly, with dual eyepieces for the surgeon and for her assistant. That brings the sutures into view but throws her eye-hand coördination out of synch. Seen through the eyepiece, the most delicate forceps loom like pliers.

As Aronson took a scalpel and placed the tip on Lady's belly, I could see her bracing for the start as if for a pistol shot at a racetrack. Animal lovers are often accused of anthropomorphism, but after you've spent a few weeks in a veterinary hospital it's hard to resist the opposite urge: the doctors all begin to look like their patients. Aronson is unmistakably a greyhound: lean and tightly wound, with dark, downturned eyes and a disarmingly sweet nature for someone who is so single-minded. She runs marathons regularly with her husband, and has wanted to be a vet almost from the time she could talk. When her oldest brother, a physicist, first heard about her transplanting a cat's kidneys, his only comment was "Why not just perform a collar transplant instead?"

Aronson needed only a few minutes to open Lady's belly, clamp the aorta and the vena cava, and bring over Jasper's kidney. "This cat has issues," she had warned me before the surgery. "With that asthma, I'm not sure how she'll hold up under anesthesia." So far, though, Lady's breathing was deep and even, her blood pressure steady. Using a foot pedal, Aronson steered the motorized microscope into position. She grasped the cut end of Jasper's renal artery with forceps and pressed it against a tiny hole that she had cut in Lady's aorta, like a T-joint in a pipe. For the next ten minutes, she sutured the joint together. Then, just as she was putting in the final stitch, her needle caught the back wall of the artery. As she drew in the thread, it pinched the vessel partially shut. Blood could still flow through it, but there was the possibility of a blood clot.

Aronson glanced up at her assistants, her features thrown into shadow by the overhead lamp. "Can anything else go wrong today?" she said. She had no choice but to take out the thread and restitch the joint, but that could irritate the arterial wall, again increasing the chance of a clot. "Her potassium level is going up," a technician called out beside her. Aronson shook her head. "I'm worried about that artery," she said. "Very worried. I'm telling you right now this may not work."

The dire choices that define a veterinarian's day aren't particularly well compensated. The average American vet makes around sixty thousand dollars a year—a hundred thousand less than the average physician, though veterinary training can be just as rigorous and costly as medical school. If vet schools still have to turn applicants away, it's partly because people love to work with animals and partly because they're put off by the tortured ethics of human medicine. Whatever dramas veterinarians have to face, they know that malpractice suits are rare and relatively inexpensive, and that euthanasia is always an option.

But that may be changing. The law has long treated pets as property, no different from a Teddy bear or a windup toy. If an owner sues for the wrongful death of his cat, the most he can demand is the cost of replacing the animal. Recently, though, lawyers have begun to demand more. Two years ago in Oregon, a retired football player named Stan Brock filed a lawsuit against a man who had shot his two Labrador retrievers with arrows. (The man claimed that the dogs had been threatening stray cats near his house.) Replacing the dogs would have cost, at most, a few hundred dollars, but Brock sued for three hundred thousand dollars. "Pets don't depreciate; they appreciate," his attorney, Geordie Duckler, argued in court. "That's very different from what you can say about a purse or a car." The trial judge agreed.

Brock eventually settled out of court for an undisclosed sum, but Duckler expects a number of similar cases in coming years. In Tennessee, he says, a law that was recently passed allows owners to sue for up to four thousand dollars in emotional damages if their pet is killed by a negligent pet owner's dog, and several other states have comparable bills on the docket. In New York, in 1999, a housing court forced a landlord to let a woman keep a puppy in her Queens apartment when she cited research on the health benefits of pets. Elsewhere, a group called In Defense of Animals has lobbied communities to define people as "guardians" rather than owners of their pets. Seven cities and the state of Rhode Island have adopted at least a variation of the ordinance.

"The more people spend on their pets, the more that cost is going to be reflected in the law," Duckler says, which means that veterinarians could face million-dollar malpractice suits in the future. Each time they introduce an expensive new procedure—radiation therapy in the nineteen-eighties, MRIs in the nineteen-nineties, experimental cancer vaccines in the new millennium—they implicitly raise the value of their patients. Many vets, like doctors, are now on call at night and on weekends. When they sit at kitchen tables at four in the morning, listening patiently to owners describing their dogs' stool consistency, they suggest that a pet is worth almost any effort, any cost.

Vets say that rising malpractice awards will hurt both sides. "They'll just bring the insanity of the human side of the business into my profession," Guy Pidgeon told me at the A.M.C. "And all those costs will be passed on to the client." But pet owners have already begun to prepare for those costs. Nearly four hundred thousand pets are now covered by medical insurance policies in the United States, and that number is expected to grow to two and a half million in the next five years.

Not long ago, at an all-day symposium at Harvard Law School, Jane Goodall, Alan Dershowitz, and others tried to sort out the legal and ethical principles behind these issues. Should courts grant animals some human rights? If so, which animals and which rights? There was much talk of I.Q. and the theory of mind, of gorillas that can communicate in sign language and parrots that can do arithmetic. Steven Wise, an animal-rights attorney and the author of the book "Drawing the Line," divided the animal world into four categories, based on ascending levels of intelligence. At the bottom were earthworms, bacteria, and other creatures that are notably lacking in self-knowledge or the power of deductive reasoning. At the top were the great apes, dolphins, and a few clever birds. Only this last group, Wise argued, could claim "legal personhood." Dogs, cats, and most other pets hovered somewhere in category three: just a little too dim—or poorly understood—to earn our highest regard.

Wise knows that his categories won't convince most people. An adult chimpanzee may be smarter than most two-year-old boys, but that won't get it into day care. The rights we grant animals are, first and foremost, a function of empathy—and, on that count, no ape can compete with a pet. "The chimp is amazingly similar to us in brain structure, DNA, and behavior," Jane Goodall told me during an intermission. "But a dog can be a better friend to you than anyone else." Goodall has spent most of her life living with chimpanzees, but it was her childhood dog, Rusty, who first taught her that animals have personalities, intelligence, and feelings. If one research facility was being cruel to dogs and another was abusing primates, she said, she knew which one she would shut down first: "I'd choose the dogs."

The missing voice in this debate, of course, is that of the animals. Is the agony of chemotherapy worth an extra six months of life to a dachshund? Does a parrot really want legal autonomy? Veterinarians like to talk about a pet's quality of life, but no one really knows what they mean. Injured animals no doubt experience fear and pain: the parts of their brains that process those feelings (the amygdala, the thalamus, and the hypothalamus) are similar to ours, and animals often have keener senses. Do they also feel enough pleasure—enough joy in the sheer fact of existence—to make surviving worthwhile?

Two weeks before Lady's transplant, I saw a mastiff named Taberia in the intensive-care unit at the A.M.C. The dog was eleven years old—ancient for her breed—and barely able to stand. Her eyes were rimmed with red, and her skin draped over her bones like an old rug. She had a grapefruit-size growth hanging from her belly and a bleeding tumor on her spleen that seemed to have spread to her liver. "Surgery will probably just prolong the inevitable," a resident said. "Dogs with this kind of cancer don't respond well to chemo." The doctor gently suggested putting the dog to sleep, but the owner seemed not to have heard him. She was a bartender at Red Rock West, in Manhattan, with a pale, defiant face and a voice gone smoky from years of screaming above crowds. She crouched inside the mastiff's cage and cradled its head. "Taberia used to love hanging out at the bar," she said. "I've always thought she must have been a drunken ballerina in her last life."

Euthanasia is one of the last dividing lines between human and animal medicine, but it has been blurred in recent years. Although Oregon legalized assisted suicide in 1997, and Jack Kevorkian and others have championed the practice for the terminally ill, veterinarians have grown more wary of the procedure. Less than twenty years ago, a pet owner could still have a healthy animal put down. Now most vets will euthanize only the very sick, and their standards continue to rise as their medicine improves. "Sometimes, in all the hoopla over what we can do, we lose sight of the fact that there are people who don't want to go that far," Pidgeon said. "And sometimes we think the pet is being forced to endure more than it should." Owners can still weigh the costs and benefits of saving a pet's life. But the more pets are treated like surrogate children, the more complicated the equation becomes.

In Taberia's case, under the surgical lights the doctors found exactly what they had expected: the abdomen full of blood, the spleen and the liver so engorged with purplish cancer cells that they had burst open. Even then, the owner wanted the dog sewn back up and sent home. If Taberia could just live for a few more weeks, she thought, she might be able to cure her holistically.

The surgeons eventually persuaded Taberia's owner to let them put the mastiff to sleep. When I asked her what she planned for the body, she said that she was going to buy Taberia a plot in Hartsdale, New York, in the country's oldest and most prestigious pet cemetery. "When someone buries a dog there, you know they must have loved it to death," she said.

It had been six hours since Lady's first donor was cut open. For the past twenty minutes, a brittle silence had fallen over the room. Aronson shuttled from one side of the surgical table to the other, getting the best angle on her final stitches. The replacement kidney had been without blood for about forty-five minutes. Most organs can survive that long and still function, but Aronson could never be sure. She gave her assistants a weak smile. "Pray to the urine gods," she said.

When the clamps came off, the renal artery and vein hung limply at first, like guy wires from a deflating zeppelin. Then, little by little, they began to stiffen. Their pale white walls stretched and expanded, until a delicate tremor ran down their length: the beating of Lady's heart. "Unbelievable," Aronson said. The sutures were holding, and the weakened artery showed no signs of collapse. Now she just had to attach the ureter: the vessel, even thinner than the artery, that carried urine from the kidney to the bladder.

Aronson sliced open the bladder, flipped it inside out, and cut a small hole in the side. She threaded the ureter through the hole and was preparing to attach it with a crown stitch when her hand suddenly froze. "Will you look at that?" she said. Her assistants crowded around, craning their necks. A thin stream of clear fluid was trickling from the ureter's open end. "A new kidney making urine," Aronson said, as everyone whooped and cheered around her. "There's nothing better than that."

Afterward, when the bladder had been stitched shut and injected with salt water to insure that it was watertight, and the kidney had been sewn to the side wall of her belly to prevent it from drifting, Aronson closed up Lady's belly and rolled her to the intensive-care unit. She gave the nurse on duty the rundown: "She's blind, she's toothless, she has renal disease, and she's really sweet." Then she went out to get a Diet Coke—her first meal in more than twenty hours. Lady lay on the table, immobile. After a few minutes, she opened a single eye.

Americans now spend nineteen billion dollars a year on veterinary care, up from eleven billion just seven years ago. Add to that the cost of pet food and other supplies and the number rises to forty-seven billion, nearly three times as much as the federal government spends on welfare grants. The figures fill even some pet owners with dismay. If society could give up on goldfish alone, the sentiment suggests, it could fund a few dozen more Head Start programs. Cure the addiction to dogs and cats, and millions of families might be lifted out of poverty. Pets, as George Bernard Shaw wrote, "bear more than their natural burden of human love."

But, of course, it's not that simple. Our feelings for animals aren't easily transferred, a fact best illustrated by our treatment of the pets we don't own. When Lady was recovering from her transplant, a kitten was being treated next door. His mother had died after giving birth, and his littermates, hungry for milk, had mistaken their brother's penis for a nipple, eventually giving him a bladder infection. The kitten's owners had driven in from western Pennsylvania and were paying hundreds of dollars for his treatment. Yet they could have got another kitten for free in any shelter. Every year, while pets like theirs are saved by the most elaborate means, some six million strays are put to sleep.

Americans are no more inconstant than other nationalities. The Chinese pamper their Pekingese and stir-fry other breeds. Polynesians used to slaughter some puppies and breastfeed others. The Inca kept hairy dogs as hunters, and hairless ones as bed warmers, shielding the latter from sunburn in rooms filled with orchids. Modern veterinary medicine is either the natural culmination of these ancient relationships or their crowning folly. Spending fifteen thousand dollars on a cat is an outrage, some say, yet they gladly spend four times more on a BMW.

The last time I saw the Leverings, Lady had been back from the hospital for a week and had a bedroom to herself. The first days of recovery are a dangerous time, Aronson says. One of her other clients tried to keep her cat from jumping down from the couch not long after its transplant. The cat shook itself free, ran downstairs, and fell over dead—its renal artery having torn free in the tussle. Even if Lady avoids such mishaps, she will have to take steroids and immunosuppressants for the rest of her life to keep her body from rejecting the new kidney. The drugs will cost about five hundred dollars a year, not counting veterinary fees for trimonthly visits, and will leave Lady prone to infections, cancers, and diabetes.

Karen showed me how she prepared the doses twice a day, injecting amber cyclosporine into clear-gel capsules. Two days earlier, she said, she had locked herself out of the house when it was time for the afternoon dose and had to use a rock to break in through the kitchen window. Otherwise, it had been a smooth transition. Jack, the failed kidney donor, was being adopted by a vet at the hospital. Jasper had developed a toe infection and an allergy to his plastic food bowl, but he had taken to the other cats immediately.

Halfway through the conversation, Shawn came back from church, propping up an elderly man with an enormous, lopsided grin. His name was Don and he worked at an auto-parts factory, and sometimes helped out in the garage on weekends. He and Shawn settled on the couch across from Karen and talked about street rods for a while. Lady padded in from her room, picking her way around the furniture by memory, and joined Bogart and Jasper on the carpet. They were an oddly harmonious trio—one blind, one deaf, one allergic to plastic and missing a kidney—not unlike the people around them. Gathered there in the living room, they kept an eye on one another, the cats and the people. "It would have been hard not to have Lady around," Shawn said. The cats, as always, didn't say a word. ♦

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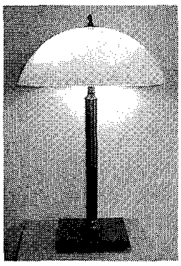

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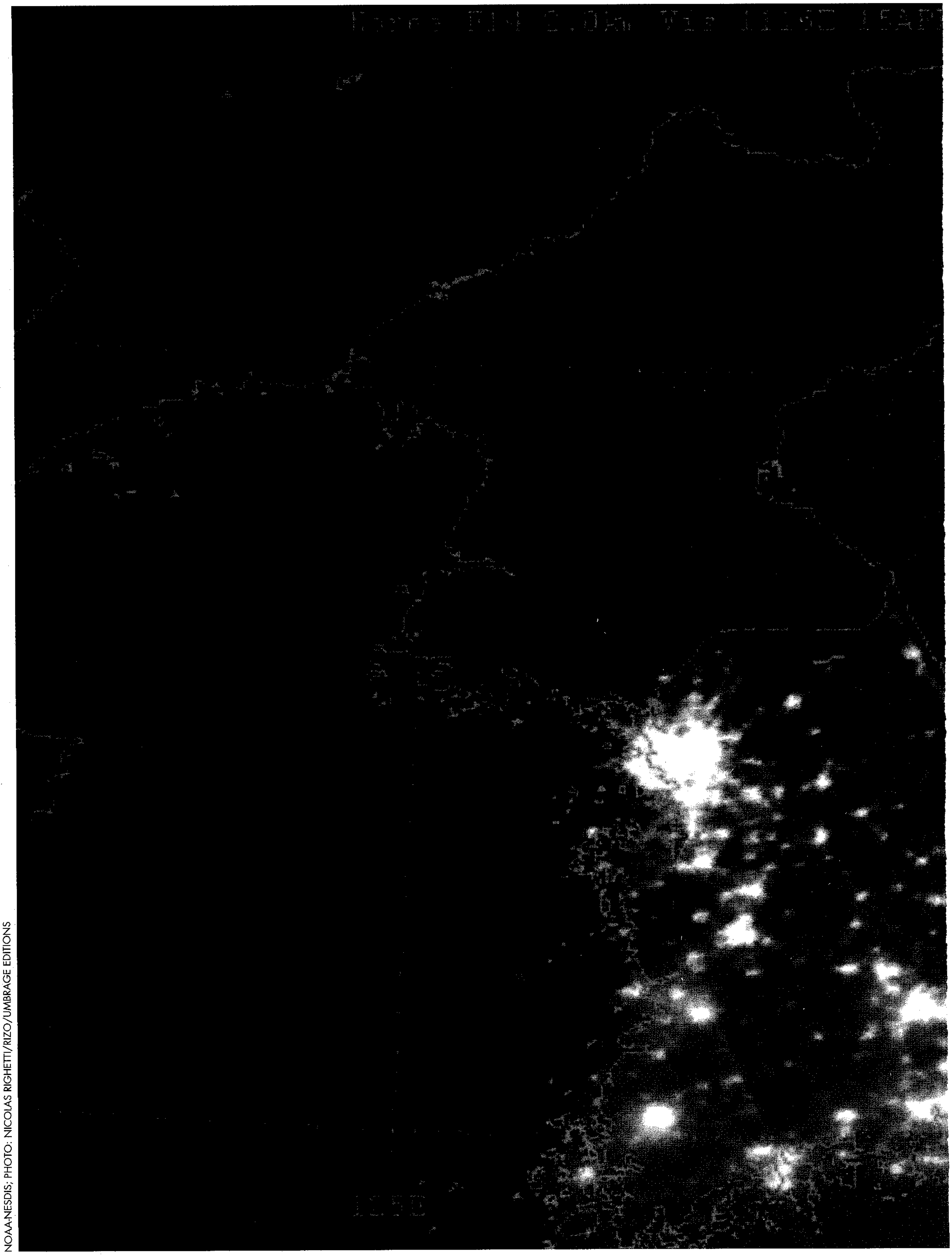


The Korean peninsula at night, seen from a Defense Department satellite. Seoul is the bright light just below the thirty-eighth parallel.

NOAA-NESDIS; PHOTO: NICOLAS RIGHETTI/RIZO/UMBRAGE EDITIONS

LETTER FROM KOREA

ALONE IN THE DARK

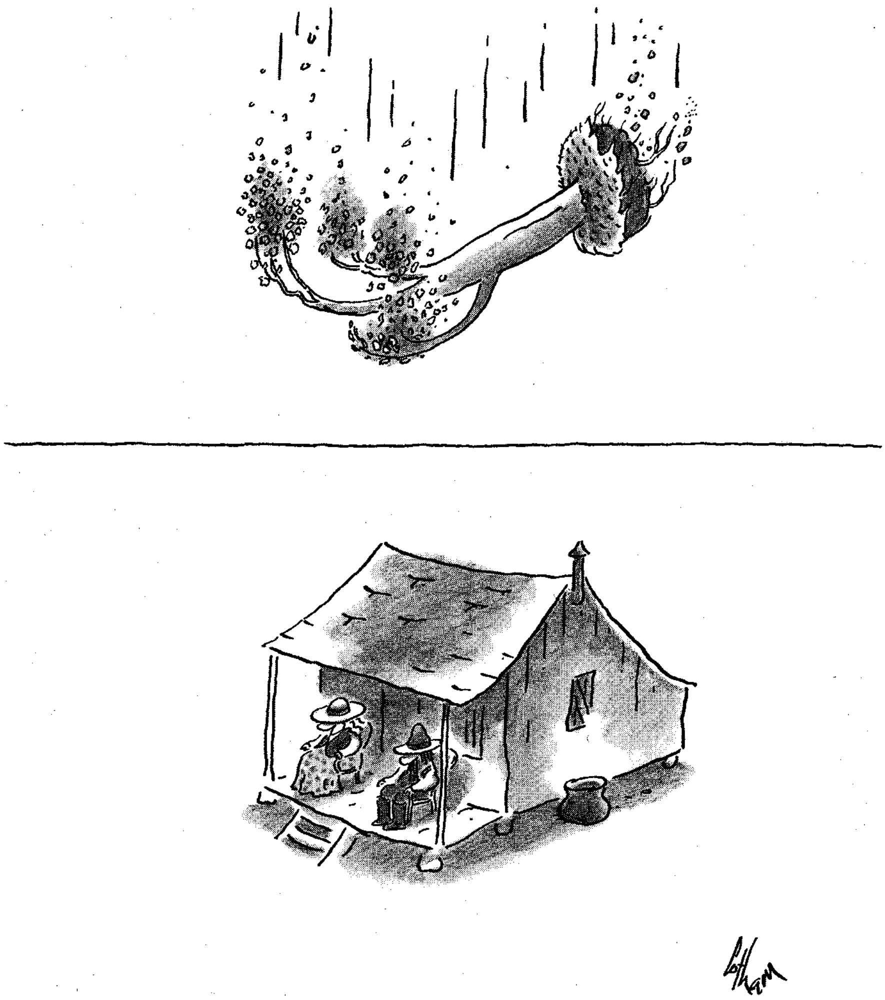
Kim Jong Il plays a canny game with South Korea and the U.S.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

North Korea is effectively invisible. Inset: Kim Jong Il, North Korea's "central brain."

In 1866, the S.S. General Sherman, an ironclad schooner recommissioned for use in the China trade after service for the Union as a blockade runner in the Civil War, came sailing across the Yellow Sea and entered the mouth of the Taedong River on the west coast of the Korean peninsula. What the ship's commander, a Captain Preston, was after—trade or spying or pillage, or all three—remains a matter of speculation. Korea, a feudal kingdom ruled according to a strictly paternalistic Confucian code, was notoriously hostile to foreigners, and with reason. While a single dynasty had held the throne for five hundred years, the country—the size of North and South Carolina combined—had been incessantly squeezed and serially invaded by bigger, more powerful neighbors. Korea was the most racially homogeneous nation in Asia, and yearned to believe that it was self-sufficient. But, although its borders were sealed, it could not fend for itself, and Korea's kings had submitted to Chinese suzerainty, paying regular tribute to China's emperors in the Forbidden City, in exchange for being protected and otherwise left alone. To Western traders and missionaries, encouraged by the opening of Japan in 1854, Korea's xenophobic reputation as the last "hermit kingdom" exerted an immense temptation. Tales circulated of unseen wonders: miniature horses, giant birds, and tombs of solid gold encasing cadavers littered with precious gems. Never mind that French Jesuits who had infiltrated Korea from China had never been heard from again. Captain Preston set out to be the first American to carry his flag into Korea, and, by all accounts, he was.

As Preston and his crew (three Americans, an English missionary, and some twenty Chinese and Malay seamen) sailed up the Taedong, ignoring local demands to turn back, the Regent of Korea decreed that the invaders be driven out or killed. The battle was met not far from Pyongyang, now the capital of North Korea, where a war party had gathered on the riverbanks. The Sherman's cannons were deadlier than the Koreans' flaming arrows, and its armor was impervious to their heavier missiles, but the ship soon ran aground and would not come free. After four



days of fighting, a Korean officer named Pak launched burning barges against its hull and set it aflame, forcing all aboard to throw themselves into the river, where they were captured by Korean fighters and either hacked to death at once or brought to shore for dismemberment by the jubilant crowds. Body parts were carried off as trophies, and Pak was acclaimed as a savior of the nation. In 1905, a *Daily Mail* correspondent, F. A. McKenzie, was shown the Sherman's anchor chains hanging from the gates of Pyongyang, "as a warning to all men of the fate awaiting those who would dare to disturb the peace of the Land of the Morning Calm."

By McKenzie's time, however, Korea had been cracked open to the outside world—initially by diplomacy, through defensive treaties with expansive Western powers, and then by force—and the warning of the rusty chains rang with Ozymandian self-delusion. America was the first non-Asian country to win the welcome of the Korean court. In a Treaty of Amity and Commerce, signed in 1882, Washington pledged its "good offices" if Korea was threatened from abroad, and the king was said to have danced with delight when an American diplomat was posted to Seoul. Yet twenty years later President Teddy Roosevelt stood by when tsarist Russia, looking south from its booming Pacific frontier at Vladivostok, saw warm-water ports and Chinese weakness in Korea and moved troops into the peninsula. The Russians were soon driven out by imperial Japan, whose subsequent domination of Korea was brokered by Roosevelt in a deal that ultimately won him a Nobel Peace Prize. In this way, buffeted by the same foreign powers that its destiny still depends on, the antique kingdom of Korea was dragged into the twentieth century as a subject nation. When liberation came, with the Japanese surrender in the Second World War, the Soviet Union occupied the North and America the South, and, in a hasty move that was meant to be temporary, the country was cut roughly in half at the waist, along the thirty-eighth parallel.

The destruction of the Sherman might well have been forgotten were it not for official North Korean historians, who insist that the true hero of the great defense of the nation against the American imperialist buccaneers wasn't the officer Pak but, rather, a man named Kim Ung-u, a tenant farmer who begat a son named Kim Bo-hyon, a leader of the anti-Japanese resistance, who begat a son named Kim Hyong-jik, another freedom-fighting scourge to the colonial oppressor, who begat a son named Kim Song-ju, who became a partisan leader, and—begetting himself all over again under the nom de guerre of Kim Il Sung—fulfilled his family's destiny and the nation's by finally driving the imperialist foe from Korea, establishing the supreme revolutionary state of North Korea and begetting a son named Yuri, who also rebegat himself, as Kim Jong Il.

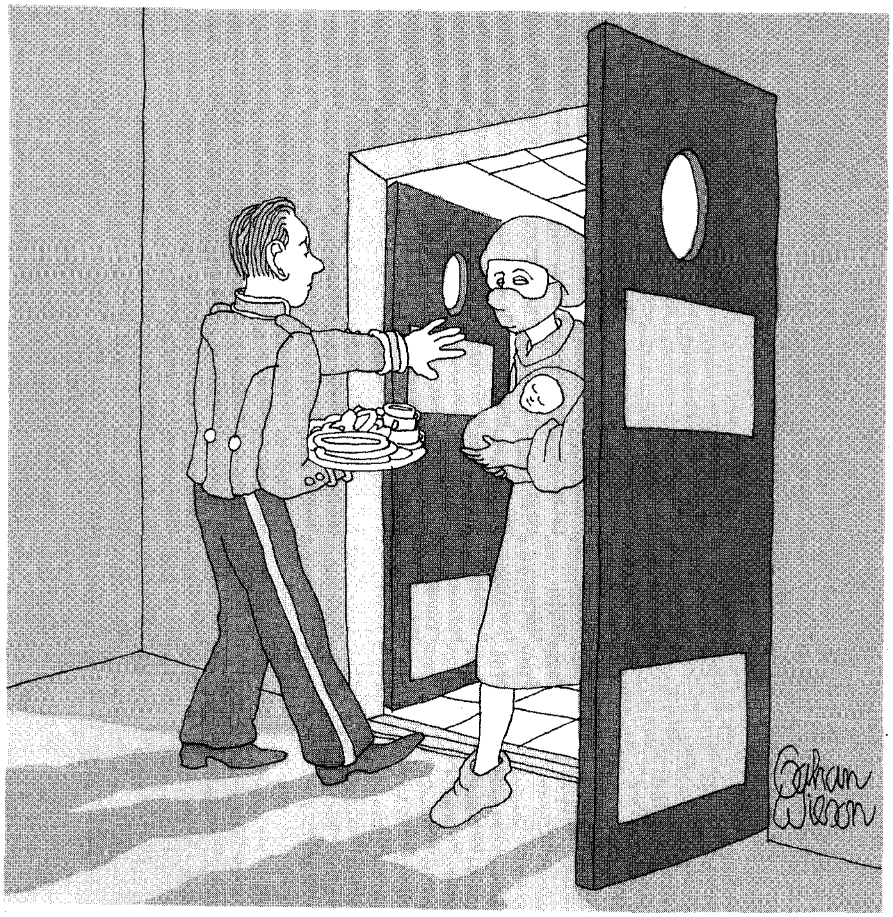
These are the generations of the Kims that virtually every North Korean knows, at least sketchily. They make for a stirring tale of patriotic patrimony, yet the battlefield exploits that North Korea's court hagiographers attribute to Kim Il Sung's ancestors are entirely fictitious, and his own are fantastically exaggerated. In the nineteen-thirties, in Manchuria, where his father had run an herbal pharmacy, Kim Il Sung did fight as a Communist partisan, and for a time he even led his own small band of guerrillas there, distinguishing himself sufficiently to earn the highest honor from the Japanese—a price on his head. But at the outset of the Second World War he retreated to the Soviet Union, and he spent the rest of the war years at a Red Army garrison near the Siberian city of Khabarovsk, where Kim Jong Il was born (hence the Russian name, Yuri). Although North Korean historians say that it was Kim Il Sung and his fighters who defeated the Japanese, and not the Americans, he didn't return to Korea until a month after its liberation, and he arrived in the uniform of the foreign occupier, as an officer in the Soviet Army. In fact, what is most remarkable about Kim Il Sung's ascent to the position of absolute power which he soon enjoyed in North Korea, and which Kim Jong Il has inherited by dynastic succession, is that there was nothing about his lineage or early career that marked him for such a future when he turned up in Pyongyang in 1945. As Dae-Sook Suh, a Korean-American historian of North Korea and biographer of Kim Il Sung, observes, "Contrary to the efforts to build Kim's image as a person coming from a long revolutionary tradition and dedicated parents, his image may be more resplendent if he is described as he was: 'a dragon from an ordinary well,' so to speak. At least that would be closer to the truth."

In North Korea, however, the truth has never been a matter of fact so much as an expression of the Kims' whim—father and son. The great preponderance of this so-called truth is a confection of outright lies—not merely false but, more perniciously, a form of unreality, imposed with such relentlessness and violence on a people hermetically sealed from any alternative sources of information that it has become their only reality. A North Korean who does not believe the state's every claim is left with the void of dumb disbelief, for it is impossible in Kim Il Sung Nation—as the North is sometimes described in its own proclamations—to find anything else to believe in. "The people are my god," Kim Il Sung said, but it is before his towering statues that the people bow down and weep, his name that they must not take in vain, and his teachings that they must live by—even now—lest they be destroyed.

Kim Il Sung's formal schooling ended in the eighth grade. After that, he lived in a realm of extremity, made up in equal measures of violence and Marxist-Leninist indoctrination, and he was convinced that with the right mix of these measures one could make one's world as one wanted it to be. It was crush or be crushed. As he consolidated his control of the ruling Korean Workers Party in the late nineteen-forties, he set about lobbying his patron, Stalin, who had by then withdrawn Soviet forces from Korea, to consent to his taking over South Korea as well. Stalin urged Kim to be patient, but eventually gave him the nod. No sooner did the North begin to pour its army into the sleeping South, shortly before dawn on June 25, 1950, than Kim Il Sung proclaimed that the opposite had happened: America and its South Korean puppets had invaded, necessitating defensive action. Or, as the Party History Institute of the Central Committee put it, "Comrade Kim Il Sung, the ever-victorious iron-willed brilliant commander, military strategic genius," went on the radio and called upon the Korean people "to rise as one in the sacred struggle for wiping out the U.S. imperialist armed invaders and their stooges."

The North overran the South until America mustered a United Nations mandate to repel the aggression and drove the People's Army back, overrunning the North all the way to the Chinese frontier, at which point Mao sent a million "volunteers" into the fight, and Stalin dispatched his air force and told Kim, who was ready to give up and sue for peace, to keep fighting. Three years and as many as three million war deaths later, Korea was right where it began: split along the thirty-eighth parallel. A cease-fire was signed, and a two-and-a-half-mile-wide demilitarized zone was carved across the peninsula along the line of partition. But there was no formal peace treaty. The Korean War had no winner, and fifty years later it is still not over.

Kim Il Sung declared victory nonetheless, and boasted of "inflicting an ignominious defeat on U.S. imperialism and its running dogs." That was the line: North Korea had smashed the foreign invaders, killing three hundred and ninety-seven thousand American troops in the war (the actual number was thirty-six thousand), and, what was more, it had done so entirely on its own, "under the correct leadership." The war was, in fact, a considerable victory for Kim Il Sung, but only domestically, insofar as it provided him with a pretext for tightening his control of the Party and the Party's control of every aspect of his subjects' existence. Throughout the nineteen-fifties, in purge after purge, people accused of harboring even a flicker of "anti-Party, counter-revolutionary" disloyalty risked being killed, or impris-



oned (usually with their families) in labor camps from which most did not return.

It was Hitler who remarked that the masses "will more easily fall victim to a big lie than a small one." The supreme fiction of North Korean propaganda, to which all other mystifications must conform, is the Kim dynasty's account of the Korean War: attacked, defended, triumphant, unassisted. Surely, enough North Koreans saw enough of the war to know that it wasn't so. Their young men had rolled into the South virtually unresisted, Seoul was captured in three days, then the Chinese were everywhere, Russian MiGs and their pilots had fallen from the sky, and exactly what had been attained? But who would risk being crushed to speak such memories?

"My husband told me that Seoul was empty when he marched through, and he thought that was strange because he thought the U.S. and South Korea started the war," Lee Young-suk, a former North Korean nurse who escaped to China during the great famine of the nineteen-nineties, told me in Seoul. "Even though he was in the military he believed that." Lee had reached the South after a grim ordeal as an illegal asylum seeker in China. At one point, her whole family had been arrested and handed back across the border to North Korean security agents, who singled her out for abuse because she was carrying a Bible. She had bribed her way out again with the rings from her fingers. Lee was small and strong, and her hands, which were in constant motion when she talked, were heavily stacked with gold rings—as a reminder and for security, should she find herself in such a fix again.

Although Seoul is just thirty miles from the DMZ, Lee finds it bewilderingly unfamiliar—hyper-modern, a sprawling megalopolis of more than ten million people (close to half the population of the North), a gray and hazy place of blinking neon reflecting dully off façades of steel and glass, an engine of wealth, churning with commerce and high-tech gadgetry, where children chatter on cell phones in the subway, where more homes have broadband Internet service than anywhere else on earth, where you can say and hear and see and do and buy pretty much anything and everything you please. As a defector, one of just three thousand North Koreans to have reached the South out of hundreds of thousands who escaped to China, Lee had been given her apartment in Seoul by the government, a tiny one-bedroom in a poured-concrete apartment block, where she lives with her seven-year-old granddaughter. Although the furniture was cheap and mostly secondhand—a fact she'd tried to disguise by draping it with lace—she could not get over the ease and abundance she had found in her old age. "I have everything," she said. But when she recalled her life in North Korea her voice carried the anger of someone who has been robbed of everything.

Lee is sixty-seven years old. She had been a Party member since she was a girl, and her husband had retired from the Army in the early nineties as a high-ranking officer. Yet it was only when they reached China that they learned that the Korean War had been Kim Il Sung's idea. "Our hearts broke when we realized we had given our lives to a lie," Lee said. "Even until we crossed the border we kept our Party badges on, because we wanted to serve the Party." Still, Lee hadn't found it easy to let go of her beliefs. "I hated Americans, because of all that indoctrination in the North," she said, and she had been frightened, in China, when her husband fell ill and some Americans turned up with medicine. "Invaders," she had thought, "total villains." But, she said, "it wasn't true. They helped us a lot." Lee had found solace in Christianity. Her apartment was cluttered with votive objects, and when she said, "I believed in the regime as if it had been a god," she extended her hand toward a large poster of Jesus that hung over her bed.

GASOLINE
CHENEY

"Look, it's not you, it's me, O.K.?"

Most modern dictators have been self-made men, and it is the particular affliction of North Korea that Kim Il Sung was a self-made deity. In his lifetime, state propaganda spoke of him as incomparable, omnipotent, and infallible—"the Clairvoyant," Korea's "sun," "the perfect brain," capable even of determining the weather (at least when it was good)—and in 1998, four years after his death, the constitution was revised to install him as "president for eternity." His son, Kim Jong Il, rules as much as a caretaker as he does as an heir; he is described merely as the "central brain," and "the morning star," a lesser light reflecting the sun's glow. In the early seventies, the North Korean Academy of Social Sciences expunged the definition of hereditary rule from its Dictionary of Political Terminologies—"a reactionary custom of exploitative societies," "originally a product of slave societies," "later adopted by feudal lords as a means to perpetuate dictatorial rule." Yet even after he was publicly anointed successor to his father's throne, in 1980, Kim Jong Il kept a low profile, tucked away in the regime's secret nerve centers, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation and the Department of Organization and Guidance. Confucius said, "When your father is alive, observe his will. When your father is dead, observe his former actions. If for three years you do not change from the ways of your father, you can be called a 'real son.' " The junior Kim earned that title. "Expect no change from me," he said after the Great Leader died, and for once he has kept his word.

Kim Jong Il says that he regards "the people" as "the most beautiful and excellent beings in the world and deeply worships them." But he doesn't trust them; his adoration, like a jealous lover's, is only rhetorically distinguishable from contempt. To maintain a kingdom of lies is to live in perpetual fear of being exposed, and the Pyongyang regime considers its insularity its proudest accomplishment, the key to its survival, and proof, as Kim Jong Il has said, that "we have nothing to envy the rest of the world." Indeed, despite the heavy doses of Stalinist and Maoist jargon in its economic policies and Party doctrine, to speak of North Korea under the Kim dynasty simply as a Communist state is insufficient. In recent decades, references to Marxism-Leninism have steadily faded from its propaganda. Marx and Lenin were not Korean, and North Korea's ruling ideology—Juche, which means self-reliance or self-mastery—is predicated on being independent from the claims or destinies of other revolutions.

In its most obvious form, the Juche idea is a claim of radical autonomy: absolute political and economic independence for the Korean nation without any desire or need for traffic of any kind with other peoples. Kim Il Sung first promulgated this inward-turning, nativist ideology in 1955, when he officially distanced North Korea from Soviet patronage. The Kremlin regarded him as a canny ingrate. After all, with tens of thousands of American troops now perched on permanent high alert across the DMZ, there was no gainsaying North Korea's strategic significance as a Cold War buffer state, and no question that, despite Kim's posturing, he would retain the vital support of Moscow and Beijing. Yet, even as North Korea grew ever more indebted to its Communist trading partners, the separatist teachings of Juche developed into Pyongyang's paramount doctrine, and the idea came to stand for something more grandiose and more inchoate than it had at first appeared. Juche is, finally, the religion of the Kim dynasty—a syncretic concoction of socialist theory, militarism, Confucianism, shamanism, and the cult of personality—and it purports to carry the mystical power of revelation. (In 1997, Pyongyang officially withdrew from Christian time and placed North Korea on a Juche calendar, which marks the beginning of history as 1912, the year of Kim Il Sung's birth.)

A vast quantity of largely incoherent prose attempting to explain Juche has been written in North Korea, but the effort collapses beneath its own weight. Even Bruce Cumings, the American scholar of Korean history and thought who has entered most deeply into Koreans' self-perceptions, throws up his hands. "The term is really untranslatable; the closer one gets to its meaning, the more the meaning slips away," he writes in "Korea's Place in the Sun." "For a foreigner its meaning recedes into a pool of everything that makes Koreans Korean, and therefore it is ultimately inaccessible to the non-Korean. Juche is the opaque core of North Korean national solipsism."

Nowhere has Pyongyang's mythology of self-sufficiency been so painfully laid bare as in the record of the state's economic devastation since the disappearance of the Soviet empire. In the mid-fifties, when Juche was introduced, North Korea, which had been the center of industrial development under the Japanese, was more prosperous than the predominantly agrarian South. But by 1970 the balance had shifted. Since then, the South's economy has grown to become the twelfth largest on earth, while the North's steadily declined and is now estimated to rank somewhere below Burundi's. The North devoted the bulk of its limited resources to outdated heavy industry and military expenditures, imposing one antiquated Stalinist economic plan after another with such a radical disregard for markets that it became dependent on Soviet largesse to feed its people and supply its fuel. Then, suddenly, in 1991, there was no Soviet Union, and although China took up some of the slack, North Koreans discovered that self-reliance meant hunger, cold, and darkness.

In his later years, Kim Il Sung built a medical institute in Pyongyang for the sole purpose of prolonging his life. There, surrounded by Western doctors and an army of nutritionists, masseurs, homeopaths, and the like, he was fed a diet of foods grown just for him, and a specially designed high-tech toilet analyzed his droppings. Meanwhile, across the countryside, his unaccountable scheme for bolstering the food supply by growing corn on the terraced slopes of vertiginous valleys was ending in catastrophe, as heavy rains washed the efforts away, clogging streams and rivers with silt, which in turn triggered flooding that wiped out perfectly good croplands. Industry was grinding to a halt, reduced to less than half its production capacity by lack of fuel and raw materials.

The news of Kim Il Sung's death in 1994 was greeted by wild public mourning—seas of gaunt people in coarse cotton clothing and little caps, their hard faces riven by grief and streaming with tears. The soundtrack on the film clips is otherworldly, a deep owlish moaning. The intensity of this grief is made all the more haunting by the knowledge that Kim Il Sung had left his people destitute. "The government rationing system came to shrink steadily after 1994, and people began to die of hunger in 1995," Kim Chol, a North Korean defector I met in Seoul, said to me. "At first, they would give fifteen days' food for a month. Then, after several months, they went to ten days for several months. And the rationing wasn't even steady—it went on and off and people waited and waited."

Kim Chol is a university student, slight and slender, with bristling hair and gold spectacles. He speaks softly, in a measured monotone. But there was no mistaking his intensity as he shut his eyes and recalled, in language strikingly similar to Lee Young-suk's, his parents' sense that they had been betrayed by their god in the early nineties, when, as Party loyalists, they were granted permission to visit relatives in an ethnic-Korean enclave just across the frontier in northeast China. They returned in "total shock" with news that the North was to blame for Korea's division, and that "Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il governed for themselves and not for the good of the country and its people." Kim's father worked as a novelist at the steel mill in Chongjin, where he was required, under the supervision of a section of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, to spend his days producing volume after volume of stories about the lives of factory workers. "It was a respected job, but not well paid," Kim said. Because a writer is considered not an artist but a laborer, the family had been rewarded with a housing assignment in the best apartment building in the city—a place reserved for élite steel workers—"specifically built to show Kim Il Sung, to reassure him that all North Korean people were living well." The apartment had two rooms and a small balcony, cold running water, and electricity, but no heat in winter. Kim lived there with his parents and three older sisters for twenty years.

Normally, one had to go to Pyongyang to see apartments of such high quality. Pyongyang is North Korea's model city, full of model schools and model hospitals and model people: residence is reserved for the Party's chosen, the political and military élite, the commissars and cadres and their most faithful followers, and the population is regularly cleansed of those deemed ideologically lax, as well as the old, the sick, the disfigured, and the lame, who are banished to the provinces and replaced by a fresh crop of loyalists. It is a city of megalomaniacal architecture and public spaces: immense palaces and coliseums, grandiose boulevards (six, eight, ten lanes wide), towering monuments to the Great Leader, meandering greenways, prim topiary gardens, and skyscrapers (although the tallest is a shell, abandoned as structurally unusable during its construction). It is a city built to awe the rare emissaries from the outside world who are granted visas, and to glorify the Leader, who shuttles between his lavish palaces, unseen, in a darkened car that speeds down streets cleared for his passage.

Kim Chol had no complaints as a child, at the People's Elementary School, where every pupil was drilled in air-raid procedure and taught to march. "I was satisfied with everything until I graduated from secondary school," he said. "Everything was O.K.—not great, but security was provided for." Then his parents came back from their fateful trip to China and took him aside, and everything wasn't O.K. anymore. It wasn't only a question of the war, and the self-serving leadership, Kim Chol said. "I also learned that in China people were living well and that South Korea was very rich, while North Korea was very poor." His parents didn't tell his sisters these things. To speak such truths to too many people, no matter how close, was "suicide."

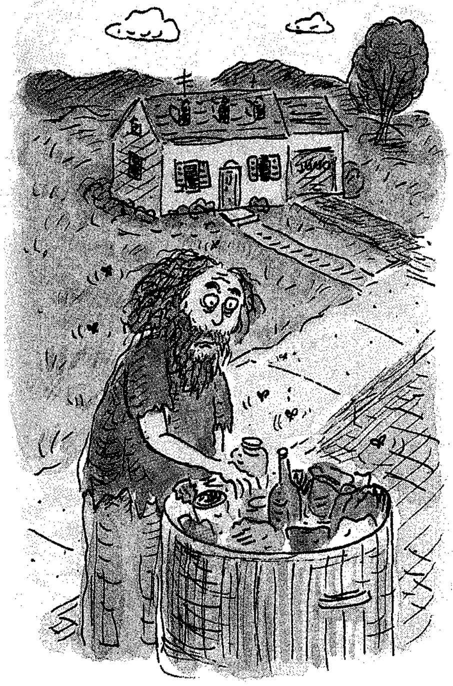
Every North Korean is kept track of through a registry in Pyongyang that divides the population—nearly twenty-three million souls—into three groups. At the top is the "core class" of Party members, the political and military élite who enjoy preference in education, employment, and virtually all other social and economic benefits, including food, clothing, and shelter; in the middle are the masses, the "wavering class," composed of the peasants and workers who are tirelessly extolled in Party rhetoric but whose ration cards, before the famine, allowed them only dog meat when the core class got pork or beef; on the bottom is the "impure" or "hostile class," in which the ideologically unsound—members of the pre-revolutionary "exploiting class," former landowners, businessmen, pro-Japanese colonial collaborators, and people with family members who have defected to the South—are lumped together with the physically handicapped and common criminals. The core and impure classes count for about a quarter of the population each, the wavering class for the rest. At least until the early nineties, when this system began to break down, along with the economy, there were fifty-one subclasses, to which people were assigned based on a regular review and more refined analysis of their Party loyalty and ideological comportment in public and private life.

To insure that North Koreans know they are being watched without knowing by whom, the state maintains three separate internal security forces, which report to the leadership but not to one another; in addition, people who work together are usually assigned to live together in the same housing blocks, and to take part in nearly daily indoctrination and self-criticism sessions, from which nobody in North Korea except the Leader is exempt. Underpinning this whole apparatus—the most invasive and pervasive scheme for creating a monolithic culture in history—is a principle of collective family responsibility that makes every member of a household accountable for the conduct of his immediate kin, so that the deviations of one are the calamity of all. "The government doesn't just put one or two people in jail—it puts all the family in jail, wiping everybody out, the innocent along with the guilty, as the broom wipes out the dirt," said a defector who called himself Chang Chol-woo—an alias, assumed because he didn't want to bring trouble on his family in the North. Who, in such an order, could dare to speak, or even know, his own mind?

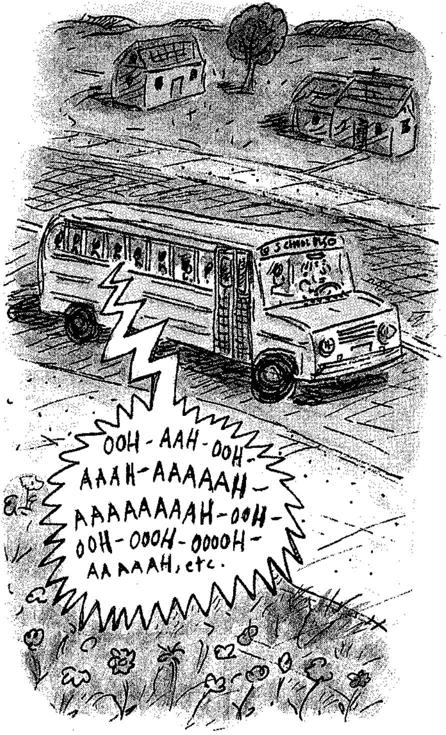
It's an old story—how, in the name of creating a classless society, Communist regimes have instead created new categories of social and political stratification and exclusion as rigid and crushingly unjust as India's caste system or South African apartheid. But in the catalogue of atrocities and insult that have defined totalitarian states founded in the name of Marxism and Leninism, the crimes of North Korea stand out as the most unyielding and unrelieved expression of what can only be called savage Communism since the Khmer Rouge was driven from Cambodia. There is no saying how many North Koreans have been purged over the years, but the exact number—however staggering—is almost beside the point. While defectors tend to speak of the camps, from experience or hearsay or lifelong dread, as "worse than death," the difference between being imprisoned and being free in North Korea is more one of degree than of kind. The entire place functions as a concentra-

SUBURBAN LEGENDS

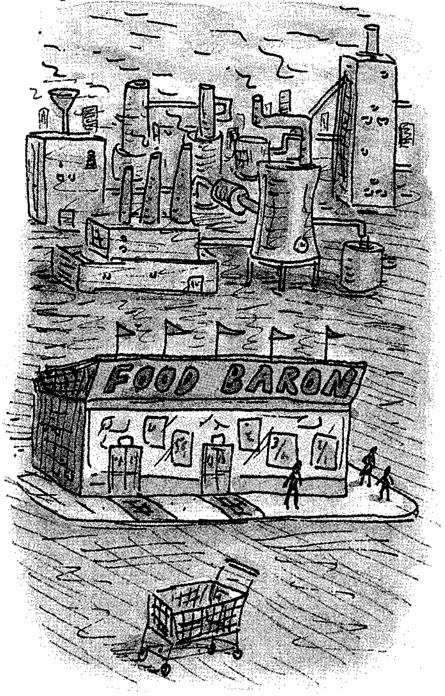
That weird, skeevy guy who's always picking through people's garbage is a Rockefeller scion.



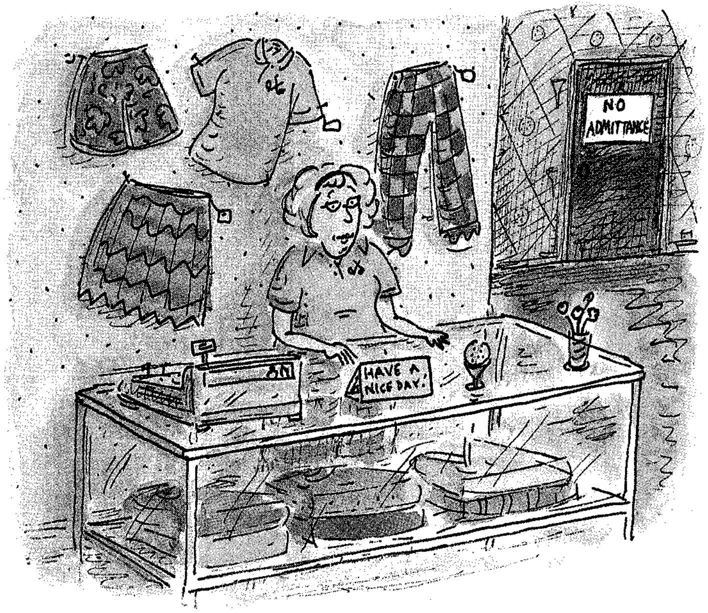
Girls do "things" with boys on the high-school bus.


SCHOOL BUS
OOH-AAH-OOH-AAAH-AAAAAH-AAAAAAAAH-OOH-OOH-OOOH-OOOOH-AAAAAH, etc.

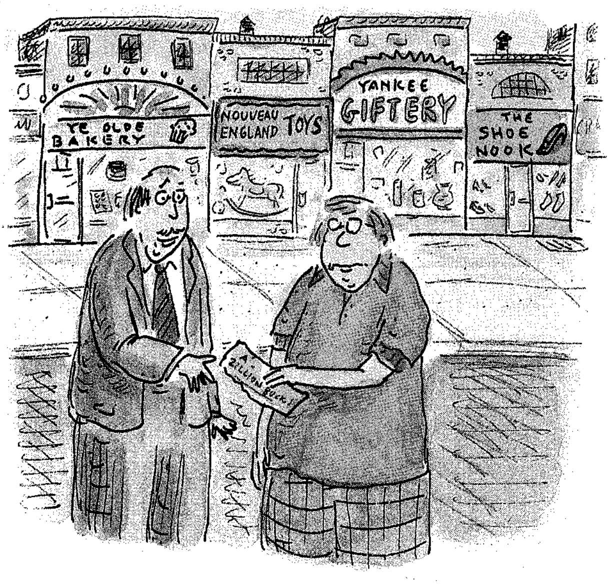
They're building a huge sewage-treatment plant behind the Food Baron.



Muffy's Golf Boutique sells whips and chains in the back.


NO ADMITTANCE
HAVE A NICE DAY.

Our town is owned by Bill Gates. He was passing through in '97 and thought it was "cool."


YE OLDE BAKERY
NOUVEAU ENGLAND TOYS
YANKEE GIFTERY
THE SHOE NOOK
A ZILLION BUCKS

R. Chast

Victoria Roberts

"Do I look ridiculous in this hat or does this hat look ridiculous on me?"

• •

tion camp, designed not only to keep its inmates captive but, equally, to keep the rest of the world out.

In East Germany before the Communist collapse, a zone where topography prevented the penetration of radio and television signals from the West was known as a "valley where they have no idea." All of North Korea is such a zone, not because of its mountainous landscape but because every radio and TV set is made to receive only one signal, Pyongyang's propaganda channel, which carries such messages as "Today, the world's people are consistently envious of our people, calling our people the people blessed with the leader." Kim Chol told me that his parents brought a radio back from China. "At the border, they cut the wires so it would only get North Korean broadcasting," he said. "But I was studying electronics, and I reconnected it and began listening to South Korean radio at night under the covers."

Although Kim no longer believed North Korean propaganda, he had been so deeply formed by it that he found the news from South Korea equally suspect. Listening to his hot-wired radio was a crime that could have landed his whole family in the camps, and he still didn't know how to determine what was real. "I believed my parents," he said, "but when I heard Seoul saying that one car company was producing a hundred new taxis I didn't believe it, because that meant there were taxis in South Korea, and for that South Korea had to be very very rich." Then again, when he saw clips on North Korean state television of violent student demonstrations in South Korea, he couldn't avoid the impression that South Korea looked better off. "I would observe the clothes and the apartments in the background, and the clothes and houses were neat and great," Kim said. Evidently, he wasn't the only one who'd noticed. "Later, the North Korean broadcasters made the pictures blurry," he said. "So you couldn't see the details, only the street fighting."

One of Kim Jong Il's first policy initiatives after his father's death in 1994 was to call on the United Nations' World Food Program for help in feeding North Korea's famished population. At first, this request, which amounted to an admission of the state's destitution, was seen as an astonishing softening of the Juche line. The sort of international assistance that would be required to compensate for the nearly fifty-percent food deficit in North Korea always comes with conditions from donors—freedom of movement and control of distribution—and creates pressure for political and economic reform on the recipient. But it quickly became clear that Kim Jong Il was not prepared to expose his country to the scrutiny of foreign agents just to keep the people from starving to death. On the contrary, the regime, having declared itself in need, appeared bent on preventing anyone from seeing the extent of the famine. The few, individually vetted foreign aid workers who received visas were mostly kept penned up in Pyongyang and allowed to visit rural areas only under the strict control of government handlers. What they saw on these guided tours perplexed them. Andrew Natsios, who is currently the head of USAID, was in North Korea at the time as an officer of the humanitarian organization World Vision, and he describes the problem in his book, "The Great North Korean Famine":

> Before expatriate relief workers entered a city or rural area to do their work, the local authorities swept the streets of any evidence of famine. Beggars, emaciated people, abandoned children, trash or debris, and dead bodies were removed from the streets. People were told to stay indoors if they did not have presentable clothing to wear. One relief worker who spoke Korean watched a truck drive through a village just before the arrival of a visiting NGO [non-governmental organization] delegation, announcing over a loudspeaker that people should get off the streets. Only party members were permitted outside their homes to take their ration of food aid while the NGO food monitors were in the city. Put simply, the authorities had created one giant Potemkin village, designed to impress visitors but bearing little resemblance to the dark reality facing the population.

It was only as increasing numbers of North Koreans began crossing the shallow—and for a good part of the year frozen—Tumen River into China, and talking to foreign journalists and aid workers there, that this masquerade began to be understood. The escapees described the North Korea that foreigners never saw as a wasteland, its factories shuttered, its tractors and trucks running on wood-burning steam engines, its once efficient food-rationing system defunct, whole villages standing empty—mass graves here, bodies lying uncollected there, and scavenging bands of skeletal orphans roving everywhere, gnawing on bark and leaves. Those who made it to China tended to come in tattered clothing, with pathetic shoes, or shoeless, with their feet wrapped in rags; few had much flesh on their bones, and their skin and hair was often blanched by malnutrition. Lee Young-suk, the former nurse, showed me pictures of herself and her husband, the retired Army officer, on the day they arrived in China; they were small people to begin with, and in the photos, seated beside a roly-poly Chinese priest who had given them shelter, they looked so shrunken they might have been mistaken for a child's toys.

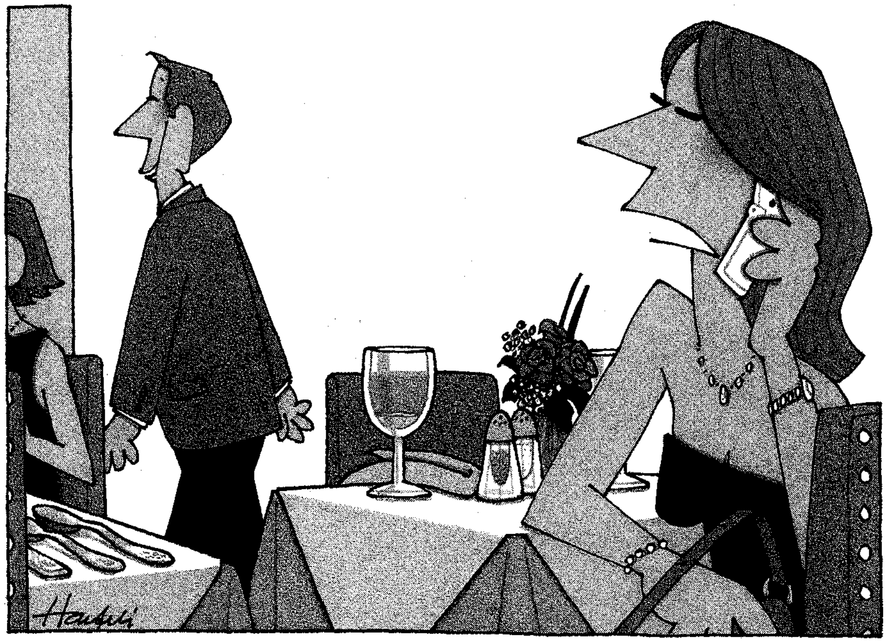
"At first, we didn't intend to come, because all our family were Party members, so we were a well-off family," Lee said. "But after Kim Il Sung's death our financial situation got very much worse." Her husband had no pension, there were no rations, and they had stripped their house bare bartering all their belongings for food. "Even though we were retired and starving, we had to work for the Party. They called it social projects, working two hours for no pay at such things as early-morning indoctrination meetings and making fertilizer. But we didn't have much strength." Her husband was furious when Lee first suggested going to China for rice. "But our eldest son had already gone to China, and a state security agent came looking for him. We lied, but they kept coming and asking. So one day my husband said this was getting dangerous and they could send us to prison. We ran away in August of 1997, crossed the Tumen River and went to a church there. They welcomed us."

Lee became agitated as she spoke; she sat on the floor of her tiny bedroom in Seoul with her legs tucked under her, and she began to cry, quietly—almost, it seemed, ineptly, as if she didn't know how to cry, and disapproved of crying, and at the same time could not cry enough. "My son who was shot to death in the military—his officer ordered him to steal pigs," she said. "So he got angry and said, 'I came to the military for my country's unification and for killing Americans, not to become a thief.' They started to fight, and the officer knocked him down and shot him dead." She said it made her ill for days on end to think of her past, and the children and grandchildren she had lost. Then, just as abruptly, she stopped crying. "I want to tell you about the deaths of my grandchildren," she said. "We used to eat grass soup with grass powder and my grandchild asked for rice. I told her we couldn't have rice because we had to starve for ten days. Whenever I eat rice in South Korea, I feel very sad."

Lee's hands caught each other midair, and settled for a moment in her lap. "Before I found God, I drank a lot, and I drank a lot of liquor in front of the graves of my children. I want to tear Kim Jong Il to death—tear him to death. My oldest son's wife and two of their children died of hunger. Their father had been working at a chemical-weapons factory, and they were starving. Two grandsons were starving—eight and ten years old. They went to a noodle seller, and begged. The noodle seller gave them some noodles. They ate and fell asleep on the shop floor. Then the owner killed them with an axe to put their meat into the noodles because pork was very expensive at the time."

Refugees' stories are often treated with suspicion as a source of reliable information on the places they've fled. Desperate people, who have proved willing to risk just about everything to get out, may have reason to exaggerate, or to tell you what they think you want to hear, or to be pushing the agenda of one or another political faction to which they belong. But in the late nineties, as the number of malnourished North Koreans in northeast China swelled from the thousands to the tens of thousands and into the hundreds of thousands, their accounts of the conditions that had driven them to risk their lives and escape had a cumulative authority that defied disbelief. They came from every rank of society, they had no political program, they were in no way organized, they expected nothing for their woes. Their most pressing agenda was to get some rice. What's more, the fact that they were there—that so many had got out—was, in itself, evidence of a radical breakdown inside North Korea.

Many of the refugees had crossed the river in broad daylight, seemingly in plain view of guards who were too weak with cold and hunger either to notice or to care. The situation on the border was constantly changing. The same guards who were nowhere to be seen one day were out hunting the next, often crossing into China to round up escapees, sometimes piercing their hands or noses to string them together and march them home. Those who were captured frequently escaped again, returning to China with the bruises and scars of prison beatings. It is a measure of what things are like in North Korea that those who have escaped



"Everything he says comes straight from the communal joke pool."

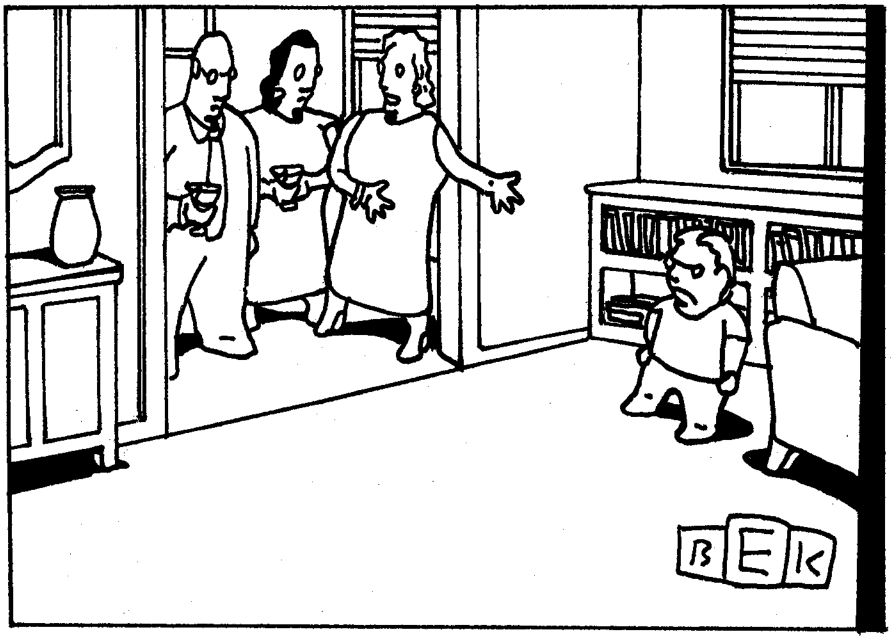
invariably speak of their first impression of the peasant villages and factory towns of China's rough and underdeveloped northeast with a continuing sense of astonishment that just across a fifty-metre-wide river people could be living in such extraordinary wealth, with all modern comforts, and such freedom.

It is estimated that starvation has killed between two and three million North Koreans in the past decade—a tenth of the population—and has so stunted the generation of children who have survived that they may be considered full-grown if the tops of their heads reach the bottoms of their parents' noses. When foreign governments and international organizations demanded greater transparency in exchange for food, Kim Jong Il warned that "imperialist 'aid' is a noose of plunder and subjugation, aimed at robbing ten and even a hundred things for one thing that is given." Many megatons of food aid did get through the stonewalling and doublespeak, and lives were saved by it. But by all accounts the bulk of it was hijacked by the state to keep the Party élite and especially the military fed and faithful, and what remained for the masses tended to be reserved for urban centers and handed out or withheld as a reward or punishment for individual recipients' perceived loyalty to the regime.

As more factories fell idle and were stripped down and carted off in their entirety, or as scrap, to be traded for food in China, Kim Jong Il cranked up the only non-military machinery he had left—ideology, propaganda, the engines of Juche. True revolutionaries, the Party newspaper explained, "sacrifice themselves on the glorious road of revolution with a clean revolutionary conscience because they also firmly believe that the revolutionary cause led by their leader is most just." But the passion North Koreans felt for Kim Il Sung, which was genuine, however misplaced and deluded, does not appear to have been transferred to Kim Jong Il, who is remote and secretive and lacks his father's populist touch. He has only once spoken before the general public, at a military parade in 1992, when he was heard to blurt out, "Glory to the heroic Korean People's Army."

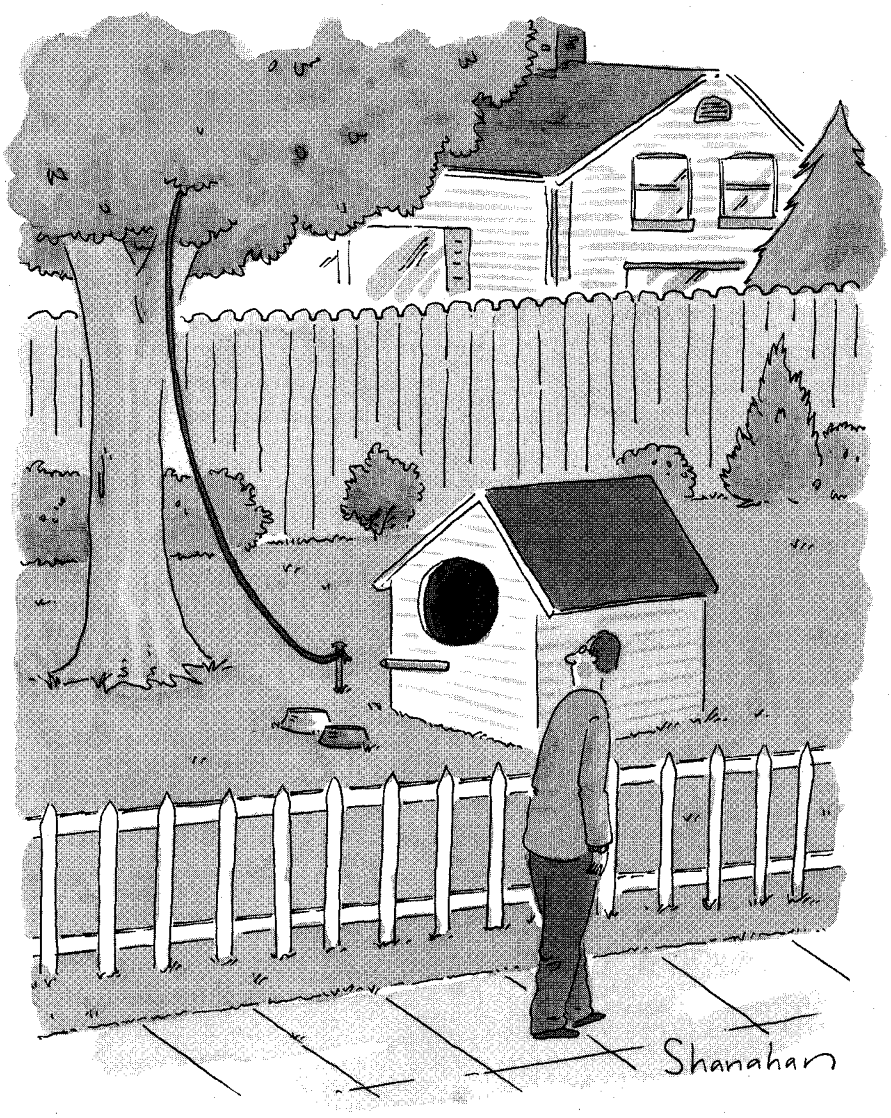
Each of North Korea's slogan campaigns in the famine years of the late nineties, which have been chronicled by Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig in "North Korea Through the Looking Glass," was more sinister than the last. At first, North Koreans were told to draw on their "inner resources," an idea whose vagueness was only underscored by its elaboration: "The reserves for production growth are in the heads of the people. When functionaries and working people are motivated to generate new ideas, reserves will emerge from here and there as a matter of course, and the work of exploring and enlisting reserves could take firm root as people's own work." But apparently no new ideas came forth, and the talk from Pyongyang turned to tightening the belt for an "arduous march," then a "forced march to final victory," and finally a "march to paradise." Party operatives were called upon to "lead a more cultured and aesthetic life" by cleaning up homes and workplaces, so as to "make the whole society be firmly dominated by a merry and lively atmosphere to suit the demands of the realities of the new age of the Juche-oriented revolution we are in." When that failed, the people were encouraged to forget the present and look to eternity: "Living today for tomorrow," the message went, and "The more our generations undergo sufferings and shed sweat, the happier our future generations will be." Finally, as the famine peaked just before the turn of the century, apocalypse was celebrated as a desirable revolutionary end in itself: "The spirit of suicidal explosion can be cherished only by those who thoroughly resolve to voluntarily choose death for the sake of the Party and the leader."

The horrible weirdness of North Korea makes the place easier to parody than to make sense of, and it is folly to make too much sense of it. (Who can forget the cover of *The Economist* that carried a picture of a waving Kim Jong Il under the headline "Greetings, earthlings"?) For anyone not in their thrall or under their thumb, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il appear so monstrous and so aberrant that it is almost an insult to reason to acknowledge that their primitive, impoverished ideology is not an expression of madness. But the truth is scarier: from within the narrow parameters of its own fanatical self-interest—and notwithstanding its lying, its wildness, its imprudence, its cruelty, its capriciousness, its paranoia, its messianic pretensions, and its desperation—the Pyongyang regime behaves rationally. Kim Jong Il's purpose as a ruler is to sustain his power by any and all means, and whether he believes his own propaganda is, at this point, irrelevant.



"And this is our child, but we never use him."

Never has such a small, economically weak state succeeded in making such a big deal of itself for so long. That North Korea has done so is a consequence of the fact that, while Pyongyang demands that others leave it alone, it has never seen fit to return the favor. From behind its barbed wire, North Korea has been on a constant war footing for fifty years, maintaining one of the biggest armies on earth, with a million battle-ready men and the largest special-ops force anywhere, a hundred thousand strong. Since the Korean War, the North has repeatedly gone on the attack: kidnapping Japanese and South Korean citizens; digging tunnels through the bedrock below the DMZ into South Korea, tunnels big enough for an invasion force to pass through at a rate of ten soldiers a minute; sending an assassination team to Seoul to kill the President; bludgeoning to death with axes two American officers in the Joint Security Area of the DMZ; blowing up and killing seven senior members of a South Korean delegation to Burma (four cabinet members, two top Presidential advisers, and an ambassador); initiating countless naval battles with Southern ships, resulting in numerous fatalities; sending a submarine to land commandos in the South; launching a missile over Japan. The list goes on.



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While the vast majority of these attacks have been aimed at South Korea, the chief target of Pyongyang's verbal assaults over the same half century has been the United States, the archenemy, and in the North's propaganda it is Washington that is perpetually on the offensive. Even the mildest statements of Yankee disdain for the Kim dynasty are treated as acts of aggression, tantamount to declarations of imminent invasion. Of course, to be forever at war with such a powerful foe makes a small country feel bigger. And the febrile intensity of the Kims' anti-American harangues has had a galvanic effect on North Koreans. In a typical outburst, in 1968, Kim Il Sung declared, "The peoples of all countries making revolution should tear limbs off the U.S. beast and behead it all over the world. The U.S. imperialists appear to be strong, but when the peoples of many countries attack them from all sides and join in mutilating them in that way, they will become impotent and bite the dust in the end." Lately, Kim Jong Il has taken to issuing threats about bathing America in a sea of fire.

North Korea is a desperado in the international arena, holed up in its enclave and taunting its enemies to come and get it. Kim Jong Il runs the place as a criminal syndicate, maintaining his kingdom with money earned primarily from arms trading, drug running, money-counterfeiting, and foreign aid. He spends the money on his own pleasures—lavish feasts, flocks of dancing girls, barrels of fine wines and spirits, fleets of black Mercedes-Benz sedans to dole out as gifts—and on the People's Army. The only thing the country still produces that has much export value is weaponry. A recently published National Geographic map of North Korea shows ten missile facilities, home to an impressive assortment of scuds and short-range and medium-range missiles. The Pentagon believes that a long-range missile is in the works, capable of carrying a warhead of several hundred pounds to Hawaii or Alaska, and a lighter payload to the Western half of the lower forty-eight. These missiles are for sale to anyone who cares to buy them, and selling them to other governments is perfectly legal, as the Bush Administration was reminded after it was obliged earlier this year to allow an intercepted shipment of North Korean scuds bound for Yemen to continue on its way. The Federation of American Scientists has warned of Pyongyang's capacity to produce "quantities of nerve, blister, choking and blood chemical agents," and the National Geographic map identifies eight chemical-weapons facilities above the thirty-eighth parallel.

The North has been seeking nuclear weapons for at least forty years, and has had a nuclear-weapons program since the late seventies. In 1985, Pyongyang signed on to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which allows it to acquire nuclear reactors for energy production. It wasn't until 1992, however, that the North agreed to grant the I.A.E.A., the International Atomic Energy Agency, access to its plutonium-production reactors. The inspectors soon noticed discrepancies in Pyongyang's accounting of its reprocessing activities. The C.I.A. estimated that enough plutonium was missing to make an atomic bomb or two, and it has assumed ever since that North Korea has the bomb, though not yet the missile capability to deliver a nuclear warhead. That assumption is now widely shared, despite the general propensity to describe Kim Jong Il as seeking—rather than already having—a nuclear arsenal. This rhetorical ambiguity reflects how little anybody knows about what Kim Jong Il is up to—anybody, that is, except the Central Brain himself, who has so far exploited the North's secrecy to keep the outside world uncertain and off kilter while he stage-manages the crises he creates.

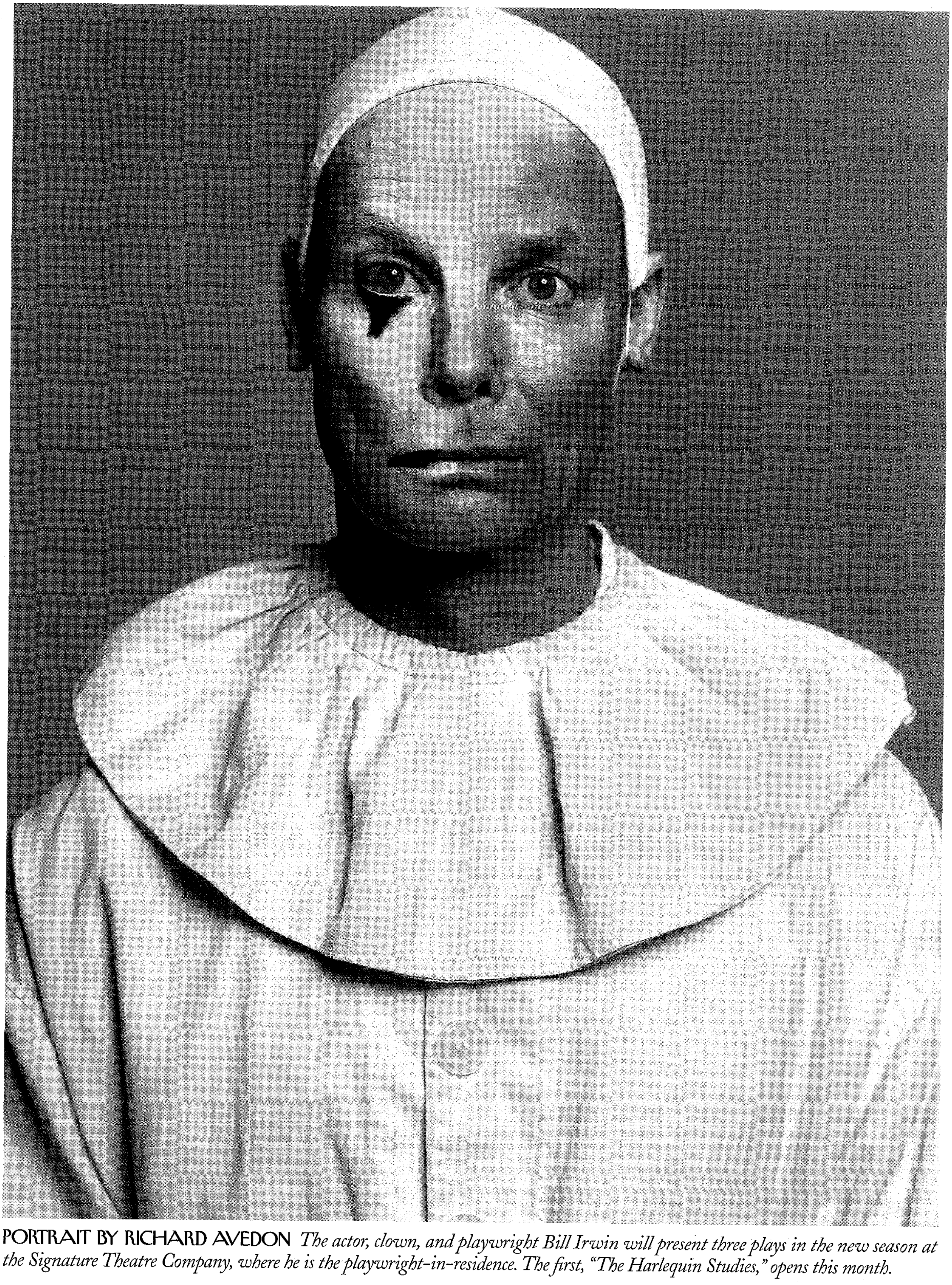
In Stanley Kubrick's "Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb," the fundamental principle of Cold War strategy is articulated by Dr. Strangelove in a spasm of sublime indignation: "The whole point of the Doomsday Machine is lost if you keep it a secret." It would be fanciful to suggest that Pyongyang wanted the I.A.E.A. to discover its missing plutonium, but once the North's capacity to make atomic bombs was revealed and Washington responded with alarm, Kim Jong Il—already the master of Pyongyang's ceremonies as his father neared death—grasped the tremendous international leverage that the mystery of his nuclear capability gave him at the moment of the North's greatest historical weakness. The incoming Clinton Administration could only speculate about whether the North had the bomb, was on the brink of getting it, or was merely bluffing. Then, in the spring of 1993, when America revived joint military exercises and war games with the South Korean Army—an annual drill called Team Spirit, which had been briefly suspended as a good-will gesture toward the North—Pyongyang threatened to gin up its own war machine and pull out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

There were murmurs in Washington about preëmptive strikes against North Korea's nuclear reactors, but Clinton dispatched negotiators instead. Nukes or no nukes, Kim Jong Il's true power of deterrence resides, as it has since the Korean War, in his conventional arsenal—above all, the eleven thousand artillery pieces that are dug into underground bunkers along the edge of the DMZ and aimed at South Korea, many of them within striking distance of downtown Seoul. It is possible that an attack could strike the South's nuclear power plants, creating an instant dirty bomb.

In 1994, Pyongyang signed a pact with Washington to remain engaged in negotiations. The Agreed Framework, as it is known, was based on the diplomatic conceit that the North's nuclear program had never had military purposes but was intended merely for generating energy. Pyongyang pledged to freeze, and ultimately dismantle, its plutonium-production reactors, and to place these facilities under I.A.E.A. supervision. Washington promised to supply half a million barrels a year of heavy fuel oil for generating heat and electricity until a couple of energy-producing reactors, to be supplied by South Korea and Japan, were up and running. Economic and diplomatic relations were also supposed to be normalized, but, as Wendy Sherman, who was a special adviser on North Korea to President Clinton, recalls, the feeling in Washington was that the Agreed Framework was just a stopgap measure, pending "fundamental change" in North Korea. "Everyone was so overwhelmed that a million or two million people were dying of starvation, the economy had clearly collapsed, the dynamics were changing," she said, adding, "We just thought all of that would bring about the collapse of the North Korean government within two or three years. I think that was the conventional wisdom, and we were totally wrong."

Seven years after the Agreed Framework was signed, the new Bush Administration essentially abandoned negotiations with Korea without proposing an alternative policy. The Agreed Framework was all but scrapped. (The promise of nuclear reactors and diplomatic ties had never been fulfilled anyway.) American officials said that they would not give in to "nuclear blackmail" or "reward bad behavior." Early last year, as Bush was making the case for the "war on terror," he included North Korea in his State of the Union address as one of the troika of states, along with Iraq and Iran, that "constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." Kim Jong Il responded as if Bush had declared war, which was not so far-fetched in the climate of the moment. North Korea's state news agency dubbed America the "empire of the devil," and demanded a retraction.

A period of talking trash ensued. Bush told a group of senators that Kim Jong Il is a "pygmy" who acts like "a spoiled child at a dinner table" and is "starving his own people" in "a Gulag the size of Houston." Kim's phrasemakers responded in kind, and Korea hands and editorialists the world over lamented that Bush had lost Korea through recklessness in a time of danger. Then, last fall, when the Bush Administration was mobilizing military and diplomatic resources in preparation for war in Iraq, Pyongyang acknowledged that it hadn't halted its nuclear-weapons program after all: a project to produce highly enriched uranium had been under way since 1998. Although Washington promptly cut off heavy-fuel shipments to the North, its response to this unwelcome distraction from Iraq was little more than a shrug. North Korea, however, was determined not to be ignored. In short order, it threw out the I.A.E.A. inspectors, shut down their monitoring cameras, withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and declared that it was reprocessing the contents of some eight thousand spent fuel rods from its formerly frozen reactors. If that's true, the North now has the plutonium necessary to manufacture—for sale, or for



PORTRAIT BY RICHARD AVEDON *The actor, clown, and playwright Bill Irwin will present three plays in the new season at the Signature Theatre Company, where he is the playwright-in-residence. The first, "The Harlequin Studies," opens this month.*

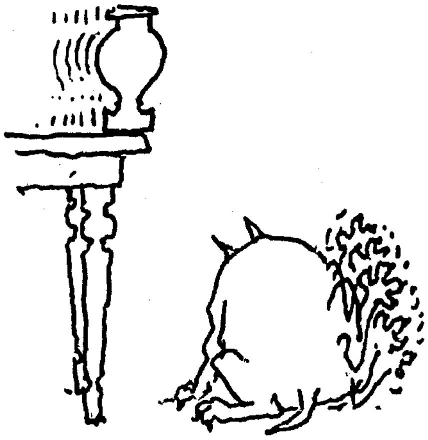
use—half a dozen atomic bombs in the coming months.

Wendy Sherman said that she wasn't shocked to find out that Kim Jong Il had been cheating. "I never trusted the North Koreans," she told me. "I don't think one ever negotiates with them on the basis of trust. One negotiates with them on the basis of verifiable step-by-step processes where you know what you're getting and your expectations are relatively low over time." In fact, she said, "I would expect them to continue to cheat, because they're in a really bad place." But Sherman didn't see that as a reason not to negotiate. "Did the Soviet Union cheat? Yeah. Did the Soviet Union think we cheated? Yeah. Are arms-control agreements perfect? No. The question is managing the risks—whether in fact the agreement gets you more than you've lost, and it's always a tough choice."

Throughout last winter and this spring, Kim Jong Il once again sought to shape the agenda, demanding a nonaggression pact with Washington as the only possible solution to the nuclear crisis. The Americans refused, insisting that there was nothing to talk about until North Korea gave up its nuclear ambitions, and that nuclear proliferation was not merely Washington's problem but a threat to all the Northeast Asian countries. There was increasing talk in Tokyo of the need for a nuclear deterrent to maintain balance in the neighborhood, and the possibility of a militarily resurgent Japan and a broader regional arms race was worrying to China, Russia, and South Korea. Beijing took the initiative, in April, hosting American and North Korean diplomats for a few days of talks. Washington touted North Korea's participation in a multilateral process as evidence that it had been chastened by the attack on Iraq a few weeks earlier, but perhaps the most decisive factor in bringing the North Koreans to the table in Beijing was that the Chinese temporarily shut the spigot of the North's primary supply of fuel oil. As for Iraq, the North Korean state news agency responded to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein by declaring that the lesson was clear: a nuclear weapon is the only way to keep the Americans at bay. Not surprisingly, the talks in Beijing in April broke down.

Washington's appetite for a confrontation with Pyongyang soured over the summer, as success in Iraq proved elusive. Nevertheless, America's relative inattention to North Korea may end up looking like a deliberate policy after all, along the lines of what Victor Cha, a scholar of Korean affairs at Georgetown University, has described as "hawkish engagement" or "coercive diplomacy"—a strategy that holds out the prospect of talks under a persuasive threat of action, such as severe sanctions, or an embargo backed by a blockade, to begin with, and, beyond that, the prospect of overwhelming force. The Bush Administration has refused to allow Kim Jong Il to dictate the terms of discussion, thus obliging his neighbors to take up the slack. When China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea agreed this summer to join the United States and North Korea in a new round of talks, the North had to recognize that it could no longer presume on anyone's friendship, or count on playing off the key powers in its orbit against one another.

Even after the latest round of talks in Beijing, in August, there is no indication of how the gulf of mistrust between Washington and Pyongyang might be bridged, or which adversary might be more susceptible to the group pressure to blink. Mort Abramowitz, a former senior State Department official who recently co-chaired the Council on Foreign Relations task force on North Korea, said that while the Bush Administration may now be willing to cut a deal with Kim Jong Il, its over-all attitude so far has been: "You commit suicide and we'll talk to you." It is hard to believe, however, that Kim Jong Il will ever give up his nuclear capability. His weapons are all he has.



A Western diplomat in Seoul described Korea to me as "the peninsula of bad options." We were talking about how the South's position as a hostage to the North's artillery makes it a wild card in any attempt to address the nuclear crisis. Public sentiment in the South—manifested in opinion polls and anti-American demonstrations—has often seemed to sympathize with Pyongyang's complaint that it is the Bush Administration's hawkishness that is disturbing Korea's truce. This feeling, which is especially pronounced among South Koreans in their twenties and thirties, who have no memory of the Korean War, was exacerbated last year, following a road accident in which a U.S. Army vehicle struck and killed two South Korean girls. A Pew Research Center survey, released shortly before the multilateral talks began in Beijing at the end of August, found that South Koreans regard North Korea as a lesser danger to the region than do Australians, Americans, Germans, the British, and Canadians.

Horace H. Underwood, the executive director of the Fulbright program in South Korea, recalled his surprise on visiting the United States last Christmas to find stories about North Korea's nuclear program on the front pages of newspapers "in vanishingly small places that never have international news." In Seoul, he said, "nobody's paying attention. They're worried about a parking spot." Underwood, who comes from a long line of Presbyterian missionaries in Korea—his father and grandfather were born there, and he has called Seoul home for most of his life—couldn't decide whether the apathy about North Korea was a result of realism born of experience, or evidence of a naïve and defensively willed obliviousness. Another longtime American resident of Seoul said, "Underlying this is a strong sense of nationalism. Some people here feel an odd satisfaction when North Koreans launch a missile over Japan, or develop a nuclear weapon. You know, at least they can stand up for themselves."

Despite initial reluctance, the South Korean government sent a contingent of

WHAT HAPPENED TO BRIE AND CHABLIS?

What happened to Brie and Chablis?
Both Brie and Chablis used to be
The sort of thing everyone ate
When goat cheese and Napa Merlot
Weren't purchased by those in the know,
And monkfish was thought of as bait.

And why did authorities ban
From restaurants all coq au vin?
And then disappeared sole meunière,
Then banished, with little ado,
Beef Wellington—Stroganoff, too.
Then cancelled the chocolate éclair.

Then hollandaise sauce got the boot,
And kiwis stopped being the fruit
That every chef loved to include.
Like quiches, or coquilles St. Jacques,
They turned into something to mock—
The fruit that all chic chefs eschewed.

You miss, let's say, trout amandine?
Take hope from some menus I've seen:
Fondue has been spotted of late
And—yes, to my near disbelief—
Tartare not from tuna but beef.
They all may return. Just you wait.

—*Calvin Trillin*

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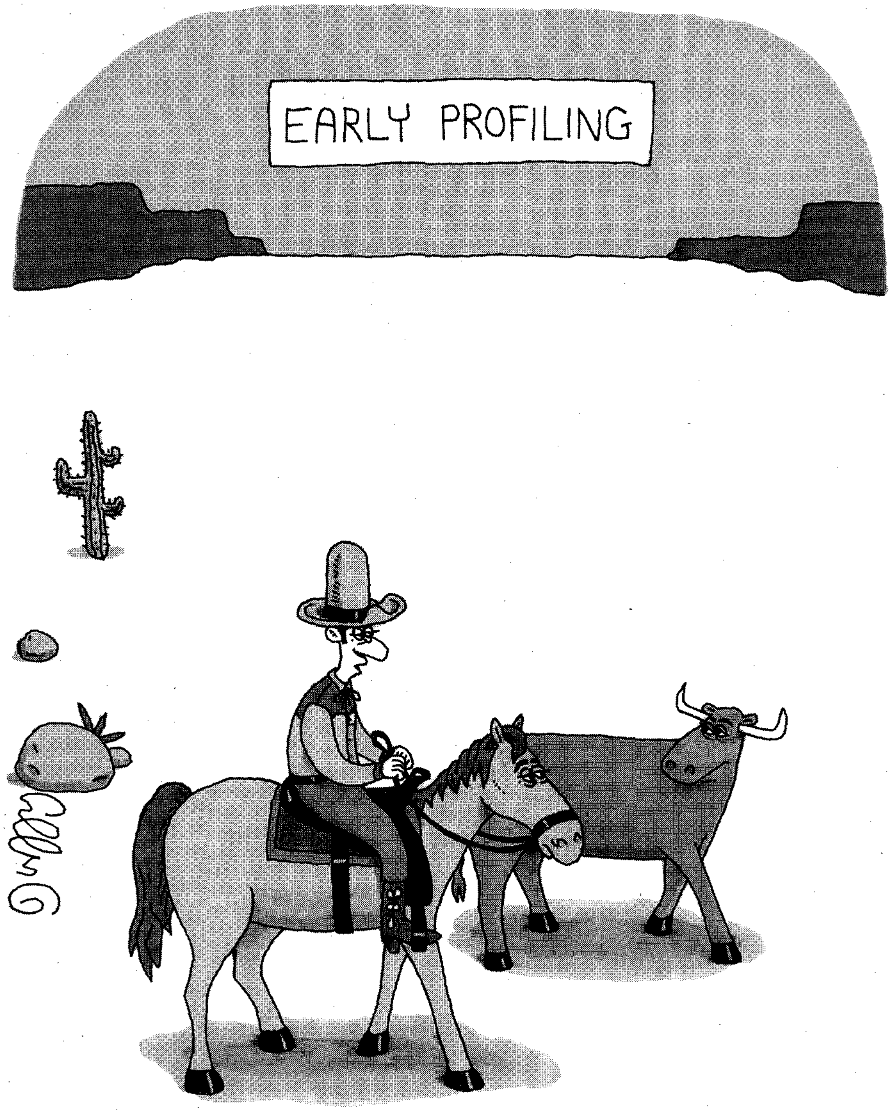
noncombatant troops to join the American forces in Iraq this spring, but the government remains steadfastly neutral on the question of whether the North has nukes or is bluffing. "Some people in the Bush Administration wonder why South Koreans don't take it a little more seriously," a Western intelligence officer said to me. After a moment, he had his answer: "It's like so much of their history—they're pinned between more powerful surrounding powers, and they don't know how to leverage their own interests. To be dependent for security on the foreigners their history has taught them to fear and suspect—I guess we have to pardon them if this makes them a bit schizophrenic." Besides, he said, "they've been living with what we call threat denial for a long time, and you're always more vulnerable when you're not in touch with reality."

What South Koreans fear more than the North's weaponry is its economic weakness. After a brief spasm of sympathetic euphoria at the spectacle of the Berlin Wall being torn down, South Koreans watched German reunification with a sense of horror at the sheer cost to capitalist West Germany of merging with the post-Communist East. West Germany had far greater resources and greater political stability than South Korea, while the North's needs were almost immeasurably greater than East Germany's, and its population vastly more hapless. Indeed, South Koreans tend to view the three thousand North Korean defectors in their midst as a major social problem, perhaps because they represent a much larger possibility. "These are people who have been socialized for fifty years into a completely totalitarian culture, and all of a sudden they have to make choices about their lives and have no clue how to do it. Not a clue," Wendy Sherman said. "Well, imagine twenty-three million people having to do that."

Even before the Soviet empire's collapse, the South's dictators and the conservative governments that succeeded them were hardly in a rush to assume the costs of reunification that their rhetoric called for. By the mid-nineties, as the conviction took hold among Southerners that they simply couldn't afford to absorb the wreck the North had become, it was easier to think of North Koreans as something less than the brothers they were always said to be, something more like distant bumpkin cousins. One wishful thought led to another: perhaps North Korea, in its weakened condition, shorn of its Cold War patrons, wasn't such a threat anymore; perhaps it really wanted to change, too, and just needed a helping hand.

Kim Jong Il has cannily played the South's fears to his advantage. He has reaped enormous financial and political support from the fact that, in 1987, after nearly forty years of dictatorial rule, South Korea made the transition to democracy, and the majority of its people now vote according to their pocketbooks. Never mind that South Korea's constitution proclaims national reunification to be the absolute objective of the republic, and that "one Korea" implies the same sacred mission in the South as it does in the North: victory over the impostor regime occupying the other half of the country. For the past five years, under two successive administrations, Seoul has abandoned its long-standing antagonism toward Pyongyang, adopting instead a policy of engagement, aimed at propping up North Korea with aid and trade. In practice, this means maintaining the Kim dynasty and the division of the peninsula for the foreseeable future.

This "sunshine policy" was introduced in 1998 by Kim Dae Jung, who was elected President on a platform of peaceful coexistence with North Korea. D.J., as he is popularly known, had for much of the previous half century enjoyed a reputation as the most prominent domestic opponent of Seoul's military dictators. Once in office, he promoted reconciliation as the stepping stone toward eventual reunification—perhaps in a generation or two. The key to this gradualist approach was economic incentives. As the North savored



"Pull over."

the benefits of its gentle opening, rail, road, and air links would punch through the DMZ; military de-escalation would follow; Pyongyang would recognize the rewards of market reforms, and perhaps even be enticed toward a relaxation of social control. That was the idea: to coax North Korea in a direction that would make it more like contemporary China, which has in the past decade replaced America as South Korea's biggest trading partner, and which also has no desire to see Pyongyang collapse. (China does not want to be flooded with refugees, or to have American troops move up from South Korea to its border.)

The sunshine policy didn't address human rights or democracy. Business came first, and to speak of anything more "sensitive" was considered tantamount to giving up the game before it began. While the ultimate aim of the sunshine policy might be a more secure Korea, its most immediate objective was to prove its own value by winning Kim Dae Jung the opportunity to create a spectacular and emotionally charged image of a new Korean order: a handshake with the North Korean leader. D.J. said that it was his lifelong dream to be the first South Korean leader to set foot on North Korean soil, and in June of 2000 a children's choir sang "Our wish is unification" as he flew off to Pyongyang.

Kim Jong Il surprised Kim Dae Jung by venturing into public and greeting him at the airport. The Dear Leader, with his pompadour, short zippered jacket, and shades, presented himself as a puckish charmer, relaxed, courteous, statesmanly, the perfect host. (An astonishing number of South Koreans will tell you that Kim Jong Il is "cute.") A brass band played; soldiers goose-stepped past bobbing red balloons; throngs of civilians, numbered in the hundreds of thousands, leaped and flailed, chanting their leader's name. The two Kims were seen holding hands. D.J. released a message saying, "We are one people. We share the same fate. I love you all."

Eleven million Korean families have been divided with the country at the thirty-eighth parallel, and the Southern delegation was permitted to bring along a few members of such families to meet with their relatives in the North. Scenes of these wailing, tearful, and painfully brief public reunions played over and over on South Korean TV, and the promise—periodically fulfilled since—of more and bigger reunions to come was held out as incontrovertible proof of the sunshine policy's triumph.

To be sure, North Korean handlers blocked South Korean reporters from venturing out of their hotel to have a look around in their free time. But the two leaders concluded their talks with a joint declaration of agreement—to continue a high-level dialogue "to solve the question of the country's reunification independently by the concerted efforts of the Korean nation responsible for it," to exchange prisoners, and to promote economic development through "exchanges in all fields, social, cultural, sports, public health, environmental, and so on"—and the summit was celebrated in the international press. "There is no going back now," the BBC announced. "The world's last Stalinist state has embarked on the road to ending its isolation."

At the summit's farewell lunch, Kim Jong Il teased, "As far as drinking goes, I'm a better drinker than Kim Dae Jung." As it turned out, he could afford to be: in order to make Kim Dae Jung's dream come true, officers of South Korea's giant Hyundai conglomerate, acting as the President's surrogates, had secretly—and, under the South's national-security laws, illegally—transferred a hundred million dollars of government money into Kim Jong Il's coffers. Six months after the "two Kim summit," Kim Dae Jung travelled to Oslo to collect a Nobel

Peace Prize. By the time he left office, early this year, however, the truth had come out: D.J. had effectively bought the meeting and, Koreans now say, bought the prize. His subsequent disgrace is all he has to show for it—that, and a lot of cronies under criminal investigation. The chief of Hyundai's operations in North Korea jumped out his office window to his death this summer rather than submit to further investigation.

But the sunshine policy lives on, albeit under the alias "peace and prosperity." The phrase was coined by South Korea's new President, Roh Moo Hyun, who was elected to succeed Kim last year. Roh, a former human-rights lawyer, is the first South Korean President to have made no mention in his inaugural address of the restoration of the Korean nation. "Our government does not emphasize unification," one of his top foreign-policy advisers told me. "Our approach, our policy, is basically cautious in dealing with North Korea," he said, "because North Korea's future has a great impact on our economic prosperity and political stability—and, of course, security."

Whether the South is more secure since abandoning its hostile stance toward the North is a matter of bitter debate. When Kim Dae Jung went to Pyongyang as a man of peace, he also went as a sort of conquering hero, operating on the assumption that the South had effectively won the Cold War in Korea and that its superior position allowed it to be magnanimous in hammering out the terms of the peace. But Kim Jong Il saw the South come knocking, laden with offerings, and recognized a supplicant pleading to be spared the burden of a pyrrhic victory. He opened the door, and was happy to let Kim Dae Jung claim the credit for doing so. By declaring that the sunshine policy was merely a gentler strategy for wearing him down and finishing him off, the South offered him no incentive to change his ways, but it did suggest a clear counter-strategy: keep threatening to close the door, keep playing hard to get, keep asking for more kindness and greater gentleness. No wonder the Dear Leader was in such a jovial mood at the summit; Kim Dae Jung had just thrown him a lifeline. In exchange for hollow gestures, Seoul was prepared to expend enormous amounts of political capital and hard cash. That suited Kim Jong Il's understanding of proper inter-Korean exchange: the South gives and he takes. D.J. released dozens of political prisoners from the North, and Kim Jong Il sent back none. His attitude was: we'll see who's surrendering.

To pursue the sort of policy that Roh's adviser described requires avoiding confrontation, regardless of Pyongyang's provocations, and above all indulging Kim Jong Il's hypersensitivity in the ultimate charade of East Asian politics: the saving of face. In mid-April, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution calling on Pyongyang to give full access to international investigators so that they could follow up reports of such systemic abuses as torture, public executions, forced-labor camps, "all-pervasive and severe restrictions on the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association and on access of everyone to information, and limitations imposed on every person who wishes to move freely within the country and travel abroad," as well as "the mistreatment of and discrimination against disabled children." It was the first time the U.N. had addressed North Korea's human-rights abuses so formally and explicitly, and although South Korea had a seat on the commission, it did not vote for the resolution, or even abstain. South Korea simply didn't show up.

"It's just nonsensical—it's incomprehensible," Kang Chol-hwan, a North Korean defector, said to me when we met in Seoul a few weeks later. Kang, the grandson of a devout Party loyalist, lived in comfort in Pyongyang as a little boy. He had adored Kim Il Sung. But in 1977, when he was nine years old, he and his family were purged and trucked off to the Yodok prison camp. Kang has written a memoir of his captivity, "The Aquariums of Pyongyang," and he still isn't sure why they were sent there or why, after ten years, they were released. In his book, he describes with something of Primo Levi's quiet authority how the brutality of the gulag is the ultimate refinement of the North Korean system.

Kang, who now works as a newspaper reporter in the South, regarded both the fanfare of the sunshine policy and the caution of Roh Moo Hyun's peace-and-prosperity approach to the North as hopelessly naïve, and as something worse than appeasement, more like capitulation. If the issue is protecting the South's pocketbook, he said, then what about the South Korean stock market's five-per-cent plunge when North Korea admitted to having a nuclear-weapons program, and the enormous defense expenditures on both sides of the DMZ? "If you want to talk about the economy of reunification, talk also about the sav-

"Well, I finally did it—I told my boss you said he should go to hell."

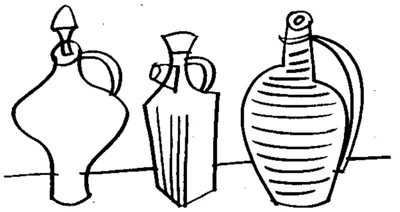
ings," he said. "And if South Korea thinks of absorbing North Korea and modernizing it, it should speak not of helping and charity but, rather, of investment." After the U.N. human-rights vote, he wondered, "Why doesn't this government think about the situation it will face after unification when North Koreans ask why it didn't care about human rights, even though it was suggested by the rest of the international community?"

Kang was incensed that the South had softened its rhetoric about Pyongyang at the peak of the North Korean famine, when the North was at its most vulnerable and could not have survived without support. Until 1997, South Korean broadcasts criticized Kim Jong Il. But now, Kang said, when there are more radios than ever entering North Korea from China, and "most people there are not sure whether their regime is right or not, whether Kim Jong Il can be believed and trusted or not," the messages they hear from Seoul leave them wondering "if the South Korean government is really against them and pro-Kim Jong Il." Kang was in despair at official shortsightedness. He wanted to see regime change in North Korea. "If the same situation happens in North Korea as Iraq," he said, "then North Korea will collapse faster than Iraq, because in Iraq they have their Allah, but Kim Jong Il is a weaker self-made God."

Before Kim Dae Jung went to Pyongyang in 2000, the only way a South Korean could get to spend time with Kim Jong Il was to be kidnapped at his order by his agents. In 1978, Shin Sang-ok, the South's most famous movie director, was shoved into a car in Hong Kong, a burlap sack was placed over his head, and he was smuggled by ship to North Korea. His wife, Choe Eun-hui, a South Korean movie star, had been snatched a few weeks earlier. Shin spent the next five years in prison and reëducation camps. For a time, he survived on a diet of corn flour and grass. When he was released, he was presented to Kim Jong Il, a fanatical *cinéaste* who keeps a library of fifteen thousand films and had for years been directing his own propaganda movies. Kim reunited the director with his wife, took him to a movie studio, and told him to get to work. Shin and Choe were both given a Mercedes-Benz; Shin was also given three million dollars a year to make films, and over the next three years—until the couple escaped during a trip to Vienna in 1986—he made seven features, including "Pulgasari," a monster movie based on "Godzilla" that has become an international cult classic, and another movie that included North Korea's first onscreen kiss. "The North Koreans were all talented and good people," he told me when I visited his studio in Seoul. "Just two hundred or so were evil, and they were in charge."

Shin, who is in his late seventies, cuts a dapper figure, lean and modishly tailored, with his hair swirled up from his high forehead in a shiny black wave. In North Korea, he was treated, following his release from prison, as a sort of royal pet and confidant. "Kim Jong Il was a young guy who knew only Communist Korea, who thought with money and power people would stay there. He thought money could fix anything," Shin said, and added, "Kim Jong Il tries to understand capitalism only through movies. James Bond was a favorite, and he liked Rambo also, and 'Friday the Thirteenth,' and Hong Kong action movies. But he doesn't know what fiction is. He looks at these movies as if they were records of reality."

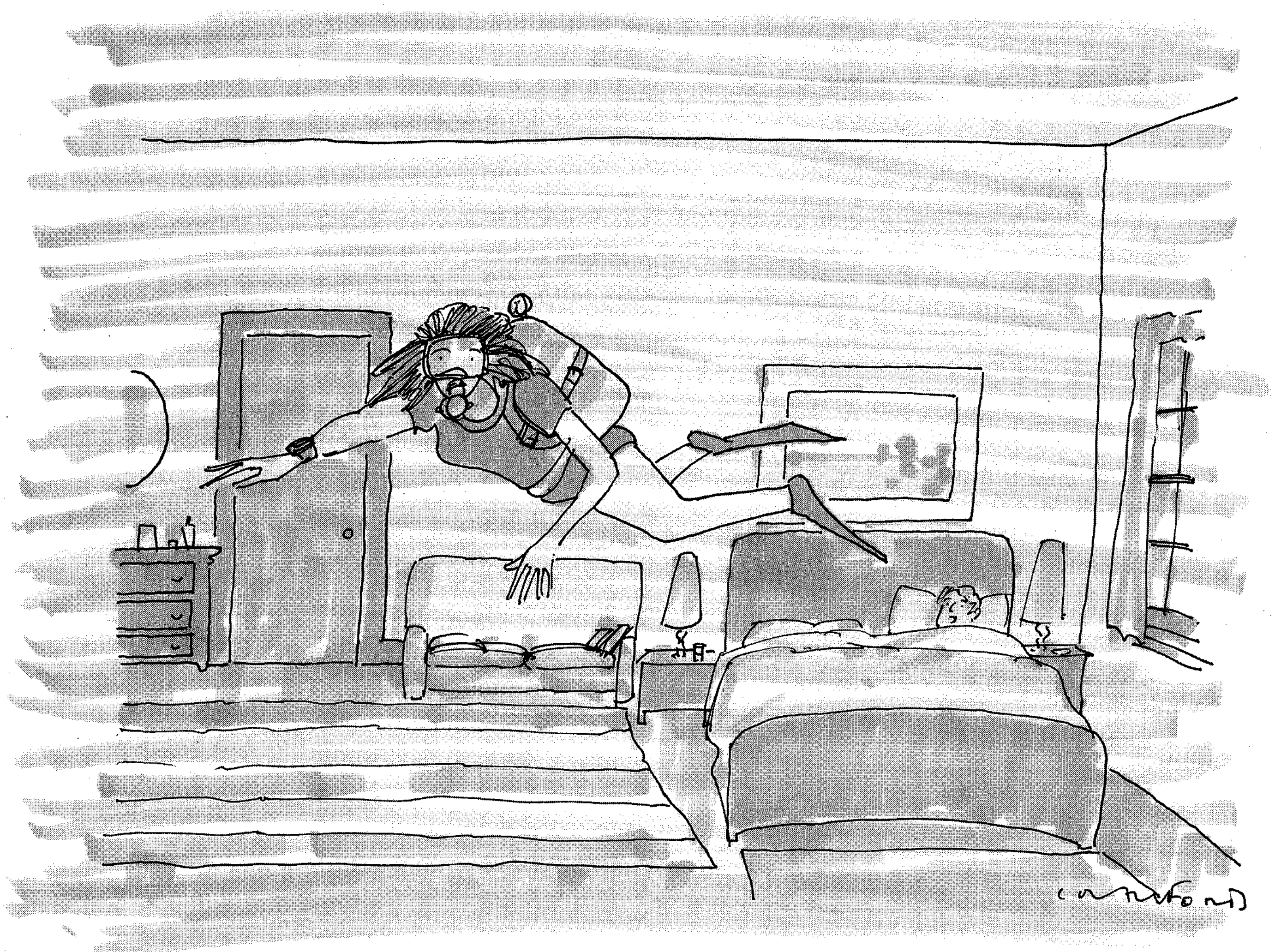
Still, Shin found Kim to be smart and funny. "He listened to me, because we were from South Korea," Shin said. "Even though we criticized some things, he wanted us to be honest. Others would have been killed for speaking so honestly." While Kim regarded Hollywood fantasies as documentaries, he sometimes let on that he recognized North Korea to be a realm of make-believe. "When Kim Jong Il let me meet my wife again after five years, there was a big party," Shin said. "An all-male band played, then a second, all-female band came out, and the women band members cheered him. Kim Jong Il patted my hand and said, 'That's all fake.' He knew the people didn't respect him." When Shin and his wife escaped from North Korea, they carried with them secretly made recordings of private conversations with Kim Jong Il. On the tapes, Kim readily acknowledges that North Korea's brand of socialism is flawed; that its technology is at a "kindergarten level"; that its people lack enterprise and motivation because they are given none of the individual incentives that competition thrives on; and that anyone else in North Korea who said any of these things would be considered an ideological deviant, and purged.



Shin spoke bitterly of the years he had lost in the North, yet even as he described Kim Jong Il's cynicism and called him an evil, controlling micromanager, most of his anger was reserved for Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun's rapprochement with Pyongyang. Shin has written a memoir of his kidnapping and sojourn in the North. It is titled "Our Escape Isn't Over Yet," because, he said, "South Korea is now sympathizing with North Korea, and it's a dangerous situation." It appalled him that the suffering of North Koreans, which he had shared in prison camps, gets more attention in Washington than in Seoul. "The human-rights situation in North Korea is ignored by South Korea, but the Bush Administration cares about it," he said. "In South Korea, poor people made some money, and they became blind."

The price of Seoul's efforts to save Kim Jong Il's face is that bit by bit the South is losing its own. Shin believes that only a war could wake the South from its complacency and rescue it from disgrace. "People would go sane if Seoul was a little damaged," he said. Few South Koreans share Shin's enthusiasm for such a violent jolt, but a vocal minority has been increasingly successful in making the South's adamant silence about the North's human-rights record a source of embarrassment for proponents of peaceful coexistence.

Shin is at work on a bio-epic about Genghis Khan, a movie that from his gloss sounds as if it will be loaded with metaphors for Korea's confused identity and contested loyalties. "Genghis Khan in the story doesn't know who his father is, because his mother was



"Margie, we need to talk."

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kidnapped when she was pregnant, and so he always wonders who he is," Shin said. "Then the same thing happens to his wife, and he doesn't know who his son is. Then he decides to unify his country. There's a lot of action and violence." He also said, "The story is very fun."

One of the masterworks of modern Korean literature is a historical novel called "The Poet," by Yi Mun-yol, which tells the life of Kim Pyong-yon—better known as Kim Sakkat, Kim "the Hat"—a folk hero of the mid-nineteenth century, whose verse is still popular. The story begins when Kim is four. His grandfather, a royal administrator who was captured by a rebel band and joined its cause to save his life, has been recaptured by the King's forces and sentenced to death as a traitor. Because the law extends such punishments over three generations, his sons and grandsons are also condemned. Kim and his brother survive in hiding, disguised as peasants, but the family is scattered and stripped of its noble standing. Even after they receive a royal pardon, the label "a traitor's descendants" follows them as they move from place to place seeking refuge. Kim enters adulthood consumed by anger at the injustice of his situation, and longing to be restored to his former rank. When that proves impossible, he crowns himself with a conical bamboo hat of the sort that traditionally shadowed the faces of those in mourning, and becomes a solitary wanderer, and a poet.

Yi Mun-yol imagines his hero with a brooding tenderness that derives much of its power and fascination from the fact that his novel can be read not only as a fictionalized biography but as a fictionalized autobiography. Yi was born in Seoul, and he was three years old in 1950, when the North overran the city. Three months later, the Americans came through, and Yi's father, an academic who had been jailed by the Japanese for his activities in the anti-colonial underground and had become a Communist, joined the People's Army as it retreated across the thirty-eighth parallel, telling his family not to worry, he'd be back just as soon as the North won the war. Yi was one of five children, and when his father left, his mother took the family to stay with relatives in the rural southeast. "At that time, during the war and immediately afterward, people known to have family in the North were sometimes shot," Yi told me when I visited him at his home, a sprawling compound in ver-

B.Q.E. FARMERS' MARKET

dant hill country an hour from Seoul. His mother had preferred to keep moving, and during the next twelve years, until the government imposed a residency law that required South Koreans to register a fixed address, the family lived in at least seven different places. "We would move late at night," Yi said, "and it was very disruptive and frightening for me."

It didn't help that several other members of Yi's father's family had gone North with him. Yi's mother took in sewing and kept the family afloat by occasionally selling off parcels of ancestral land. For years, she clung to the belief that her husband would return, but Yi realized at an early age that it would be impossible for a man who had pledged his allegiance to Pyongyang to come back. "The armistice line had been drawn, the DMZ was in place, children were already being taught anti-Communist propaganda in school," he said. So for Yi it was as it had been for Kim Sakkat. "I was taught in school that the Communists are bad, and my father had chosen to go with the Communists, so in a way I must be bad, too," he said. "But on the other hand this felt wrong, because I must love my family and they couldn't be bad."

Yi is a stout man, with a big head and a great mop of hair flecked with gray. Since 1979, he has published twenty novels (many of them running to multiple volumes) and fifty short stories, and his work—about seventy volumes in all—has earned him high critical acclaim and fantastic sales. (In South Korea, a country of forty-eight million, he has sold twenty-five million books.) Still, Yi considers himself a man apart from the mainstream of Korean literature. The reason for this is not so much the painful legacy of his father's defection to the North but, rather, that in his efforts to come to terms with the Korean predicament, and his place in it, Yi does not find much use for the dominant emotion of the nation's cultural and political life, a condition known as *han*, which Koreans insist is uniquely Korean and has no proper equivalent in any foreign language.

The word *han* actually comes from the Chinese, and as Gary Rector, a writer and editor who lives in Seoul and is one of the few Americans ever to be naturalized as a Korean citizen, explained, "The Chinese character shows a heart and it shows a head that's turned away." Yi described *han* sentiment, somewhat dismissively, as "a peculiar mixture of tragedy and comedy," and Rector, who was interpreting for me, elaborated: "*Han* is an anger and resentment that build up, and at the same time a feeling of frustration or a feeling of desires that are unfulfilled. So resentment, frustration, bitter longing are lumped together." Other explicators stress *han's* cumulative nature, the steady accretion of a pattern of lesser injuries into one large and abiding sense of woundedness. Humiliation is a key ingredient of *han*, which is where its ironic or comic side comes into play: the self-mockery of the self-loving who are all too aware of their weakness. It is touted as a keenly Korean emotion because it recognizes the contradictions of the Korean experience: traditionally, the intense nationalism and yearning for purity, so close to German ideas of *volk*, coupled with an overwhelming experience of victimhood, and, for the past fifty years, the bitter reality of national division.

Han at its tenderest is melancholic and wistful, and in its darker forms militant and vengeful; in either case it is freighted with dissatisfaction and the temptations of extremism. Yi, who describes himself as "basically apolitical," prefers to acknowledge that "there's always a kind of duality to our existence." Nevertheless, as he grew up grappling with the burden of his patrimony, he could not find a way to balance the competing public and private claims on his allegiance.

When he was fifteen, Yi heard from

defectors that his father had been purged. He had last been seen in 1954, a year in which Kim Il Sung was thinning the ranks of the Southern Labor Party, and it seemed certain that he had been killed or sent to a camp to die. "For me that resolved the issue," Yi said. He had been reading about Communism, trying unsuccessfully to grasp its attraction for his father. The more he read, the more he came to accept the government line in the South, that Communism was an impossible choice. Learning that his father had been purged, and could be assumed to be dead, only confirmed this view. "That doesn't mean that I gave up on my father, or no longer thought of him," he said. The news brought relief, allowing Yi to think of his father as a man who had made a mistake, and only discovered it in the worst way.

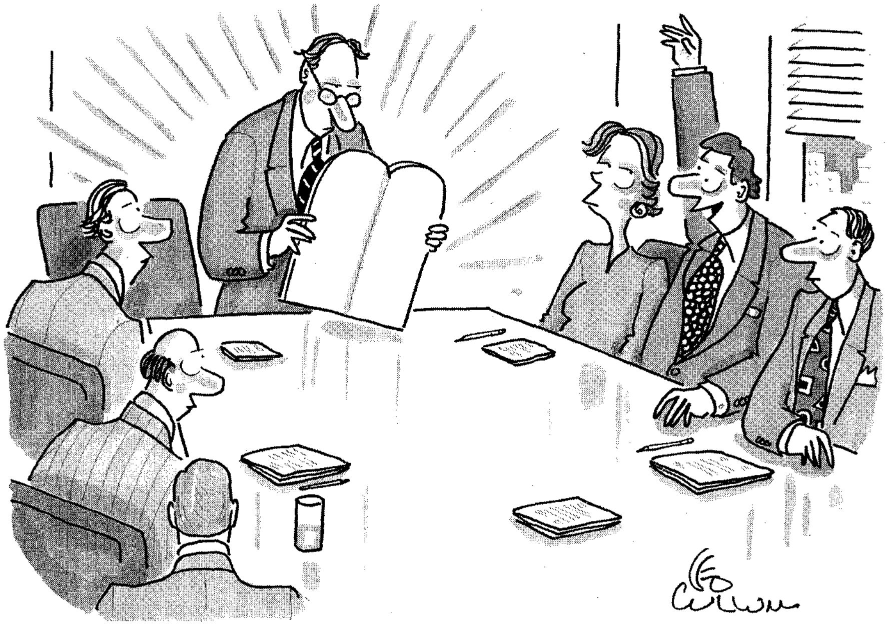
Then, in the mid-eighties, Yi received a letter from his father, who had spent thirty years in prison camps. He said he recognized at once that the "letter was written by force"—dictated "by some government official telling him what to say: convince your son not to write any pro-American stuff and so on"—and much later he was able to confirm this impression. The letter mentioned that his father had a second family in the North, another brood of five children. Yi had no way to reply, even if he had wanted to. He could only imagine the lives of his half brothers and half sisters, and in 1994 he published a novella called "An Appointment with My Brother." Writing in the first person, Yi describes a journey to China's northeast, where the narrator of the story goes to meet his father. The Korean-Chinese intermediary he has hired to enter North Korea returns with the news that his father has died, and offers instead to produce one of his sons.

They meet in the morning, at the narrator's hotel, with an instant shock of familial recognition, and at first their encounter is charged with "the inborn antagonism that exists between half-brothers." Each seeks to assert his primacy in his father's affections, and also his self-sufficiency as an adult. A current of North-South friction runs through the barbs. The narrator boasts about his wealth, and his brother expresses disdain for it as evidence of dependency on America. Both men revert to caricatures of their positions, exaggerating their personal and social credentials. Although the sparring soon fades, the stiffness persists when they head off to the banks of the Tumen River to face North Korea and perform the traditional Confucian commemorative rites for their father. By the time they part, they do so amicably, but the narrator drinks heavily into the evening, and shortly after he returns to his hotel room, his brother, also drunk, knocks on the door and asks to come in.

"How I hated you and envied you," he says, and he recalls how his family was restricted at every step, barred from advancement, denied admission to the better schools, held back in the Army. "It was because of the blood relations Father had in the South," he says, adding, "You and your family were to us not so much human beings as an invisible curse." The narrator is stunned: "It was such a curious reversal. What I stood for to my brother was exactly what my father stood for to me in the days of my unfortunate youth." His brother goes on, reciting the hardships of life in the North, and telling of their father's agony on his deathbed because there was no money left to buy painkillers. The narrator muses, "My dear brother, please stop. You have to live under that system for some time yet. If you can't get shoes that fit you, you have to make your feet fit your shoes. Of course it's best to find shoes that fit your feet, but that is not always possible for everyone. The shoe shops of history are always run by unskilled shoemakers."

There is no moral to Yi's story, only the awareness that this is what Korea has come to: half brothers, living in their respective half countries, who have inherited a situation that neither one wants and that weakens them both, and binds them by keeping them apart.

"It's a situation that has to be improved," Yi said. But it worried him that the South was laying itself open, while the North remained a clenched fist. "It's like the old fight between the sun and the wind—there's a Korean tale about which one can make the wanderer take off his clothes." Yi's "Korean tale" was Aesop's fable. "The sun does it by trying to heat him up, and the wind does it by trying to blow the clothes off. Of course, if the sun is going to win, the traveller mustn't know that that's the sun's purpose. The traveller must simply take off his clothes. But in South Korea we have told them, Now we're going to shine our light on you guys and be nice to you in order to make you open to us. They're not going to open up. They're going to take advantage of whatever you offer them, and that's it. What I'm concerned about is that they're not the ones who are taking off their clothes—we're the ones who are taking off our clothes." ♦

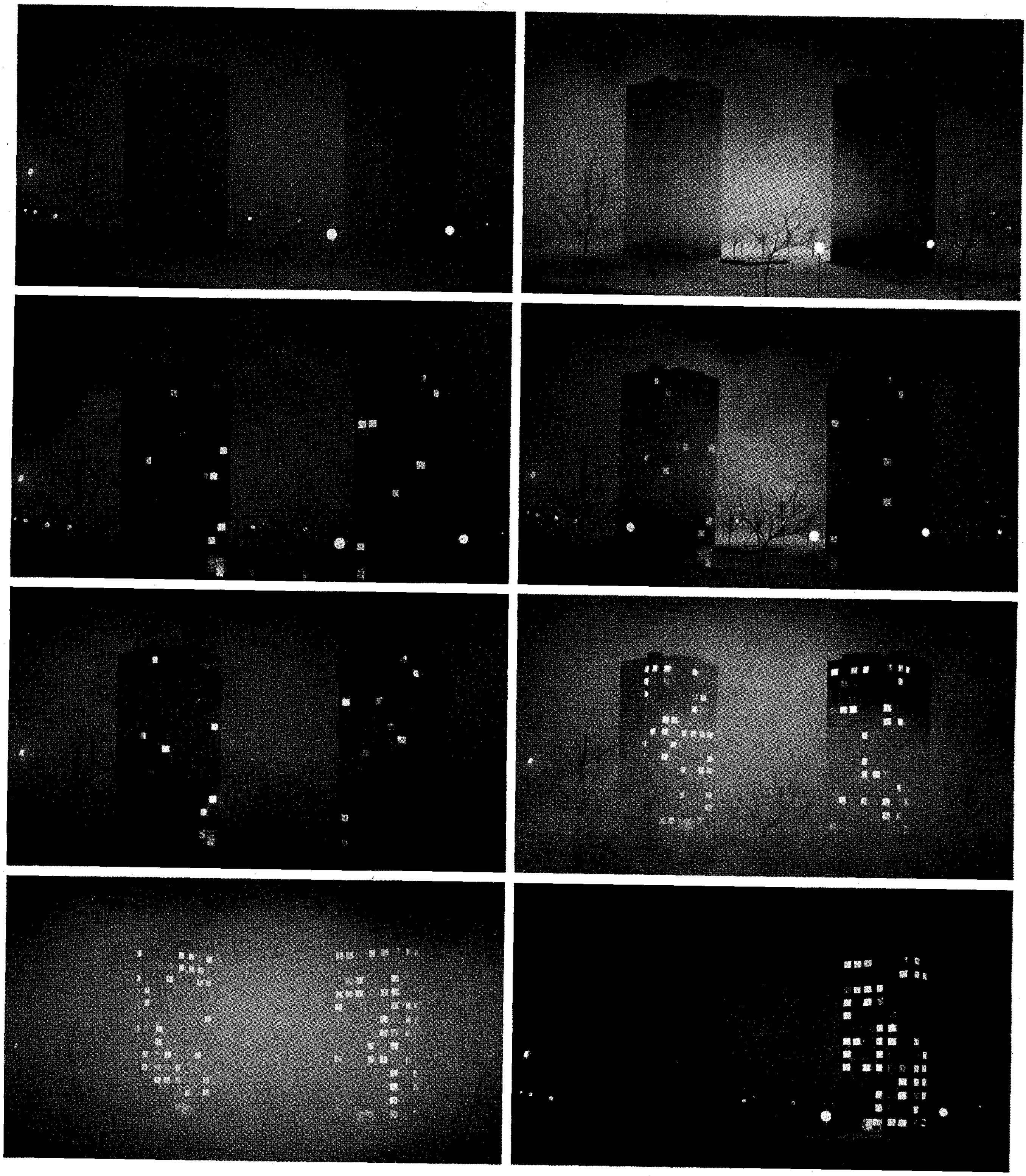


"Are these just guidelines, or are they actual new policies?"

FICTION

THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEAD

BY KEVIN BROCKMEIER



When the blind man arrived in the city, he claimed that he had travelled across a desert of living sand. First he had died, he said, and then—*snap!*—the desert. He told the story to everyone who would listen, bobbing his head to follow the sound of their footsteps. Showers of red grit fell from his beard. He said that the desert was bare and lonesome and that it had hissed at him like a snake. He had walked for days and days, until the dunes broke apart beneath his feet, surging up around him to lash at his face, then everything went still and began to beat like a heart. The sound was as clear as any he had ever heard. It was only at that moment, he said, with a million arrow-points of sand striking his skin, that he had truly realized he was dead.

Jim Singer, who managed the sandwich shop in the monument district, said that he had felt a prickling sensation in his fingers and then stopped breathing. "It was my heart," he insisted, thumping on his chest. "Took me in my own bed." He had closed his eyes, and when he opened them again he was on a train, the kind that trolleys small children around in circles at amusement parks. The rails were leading him through a thick forest of gold-brown trees, but the trees were actually giraffes, and their long necks were reaching like branches into the sky. A wind rose up and peeled the spots from their backs. The spots floated down around him, swirling and dipping in the wake of the train. It took him a long time to understand that the throbbing noise he heard was not the rattling of the wheels along the tracks.

The girl who liked to stand beneath the poplar tree in the park said that she had died into an ocean the color of dried cherries. For a while, the water had carried her weight, she said, and she lay on her back turning in meaningless circles, singing the choruses of the pop songs she remembered. But then there was a drum of thunder, and the clouds split open, and the ball bearings began to pelt down around her—tens of thousands of them. She had swallowed as many as she could, she said, stroking the cracked trunk of the poplar tree. She didn't know why. She filled like a lead sack and sank slowly through the layers of the ocean. Shoals of fish brushed past her, their blue and yellow scales the brightest thing in the water. And all around her she heard that sound, the one that everybody heard, the regular pulsing of a giant heart.

The stories people told about the crossing were as varied and elaborate as their ten billion lives, so much more particular than the other stories, the ones they told about their deaths. After all, there were only so many ways a person could die: either your heart took you, or your head took you, or it was one of the new diseases. But no one followed the same path over the crossing. Lev Paley said that he had watched his atoms break apart like marbles, roll across the universe, then gather themselves together again out of nothing at all. Hanbing Li said that he woke inside the body of an aphid and lived an entire life in the flesh of a single peach. Graciella Cavazos would say only that she began to snow—four words—and smile bashfully whenever anyone pressed her for details.

No two reports were ever the same. And yet always there was the drumlike thumping noise.

Some people insisted that it never went away, that if you concentrated and did not turn your ear from the sound, you could hear it faintly behind everything in the city—the brakes and the horns, the bells on the doors of restaurants, the clicking and slapping of different kinds of shoes on the pavement. Groups of people came together in parks or on rooftops just to listen for it, sitting quietly with their backs turned to each other. *Ba-dum. Ba-dum. Ba-dum.* It was like trying to keep a bird in sight as it lifted, blurred, and faded to a dot in the sky.

Luka Sims had found an old mimeograph machine his very first week in the city and decided to use it to produce a newspaper. He stood outside the River Road Coffee Shop every morning, handing out the circulars he had printed. One particular issue of the *L. Sims News & Speculation Sheet*—the *Sims Sheet*, people called it—addressed the matter of this sound. Fewer than twenty per cent of the people Luka interviewed claimed that they could still hear it after the crossing, but almost everyone agreed that it resembled nothing so much as—could be nothing other than—the pounding of a heart. The question, then, was where did it come from? It could not be their own hearts, for their hearts no longer beat. The old man Mahmoud Qassim believed that it was not the actual sound of his heart but the remembered sound, which, because he had both heard and failed to notice it for so long, still resounded in his ears. The woman who sold bracelets by the river thought that it was the heartbeat at the center of the world, that bright, boiling place she had fallen through on her way to the city. "As for this reporter," the article concluded, "I hold with the majority. I have always suspected that the thumping sound we hear is the pulse of those who are still alive. The living carry us inside them like pearls. We survive only so long as they remember us." It was an imperfect metaphor—Luka knew that—since the pearl lasts much longer than the oyster. But rule one in the newspaper business was that you had to meet your deadlines. He had long since given up the quest for perfection.

There were more people in the city every day, and yet the city never failed to accommodate them. You might be walking down a street you had known for years, and all of a sudden you would come upon another building, another whole block. Carson McCaughrean, who drove one of the sleek black taxis that roamed the streets, had to redraw his maps once a week. Twenty, thirty, fifty times a day, he would pick up a fare who had only recently arrived in the city and have to deliver him somewhere he—Carson—had never heard of. They came from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. They came from churning metropolises and from small islands in the middle of the ocean. That was what the living did: they died. There was an ancient street musician who began playing in the red brick district as soon as he reached the city, making slow, sad breaths with his accordion. There was a jeweller, a young man, who set up shop at the corner of Maple and Christopher Streets and sold diamonds that he mounted on silver pendants. Jessica Auffert had operated her own jewelry shop on the same corner for more than thirty years, but she did not seem to resent the man, and in fact brought him a mug of fresh black coffee every morning, exchanging gossip as she drank with him in his front room. What surprised

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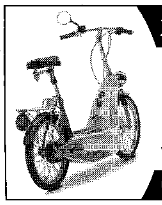
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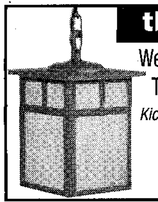
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her was how young he was—how young so many of the dead were these days. Great numbers of them were no more than children, who clattered around on skateboards or went racing past her window on their way to the playground. One, a boy with a strawberry discoloration on his cheek, liked to pretend that the rocking horses he tossed himself around on were real horses, the horses he had brushed and fed on his farm before they were killed in the bombing. Another liked to swoop down the slide over and over again, hammering his feet into the gravel as he thought about his parents and his two older brothers, who were still alive. He had watched them lift free of the same illness that had slowly sucked him under. He did not like to talk about it.

This was during a war, though it was difficult for any of them to remember which one.

Occasionally, one of the dead, someone who had just completed the crossing, would mistake the city for Heaven. It was a misunderstanding that never persisted for long. What kind of Heaven had the blasting sound of garbage trucks in the morning, and chewing gum on the pavement, and the smell of fish rotting by the river? What kind of Hell, for that matter, had bakeries and dogwood trees and perfect blue days that made the hairs on the back of your neck rise on end? No, the city was not Heaven, and it was not Hell, and it certainly was not the world. It stood to reason, then, that it had to be something else. More and more people came to adopt the theory that it was an extension of life itself—a sort of outer room—and that they would remain there only so long as they endured in living memory. When the last person who had actually known them died, they would pass over into whatever came next. It was true that most of the city's occupants went away after sixty or seventy years. While this did not prove the theory, it certainly served to nourish it. There were stories of men and women who had been in the city much longer, for centuries and more, but there were always such stories, in every time and place, and who knew whether to believe them?

Every neighborhood had its gathering spot, a place where people could come together to trade news of the other world. There was the colonnade in the monument district, and the One and Only Tavern in the warehouse district, and right next to the greenhouse, in the center of the conservatory district, was Andrei Kalatozov's Russian Tea Room. Kalatozov poured the tea he brewed from a brass-colored samovar into small porcelain cups that he served on polished wooden platters. His wife and daughter had died a few weeks before he did, in an accident involving a land mine they had rooted up out of the family garden. He was watching through the kitchen window when it happened. His wife's spade struck a jagged hunk of metal so cankered with rust from its century underground that he did not realize what it was until it exploded. Two weeks later, when he put the razor to his throat, it was with the hope that he would be reunited with his family in Heaven. And, sure enough, there they were—his wife and daughter—smiling and taking coats at the door of the tearoom. Kalatozov watched them as he sliced a lemon into wedges and arranged the wedges on a saucer. He was the happiest man in the room—the happiest man in any room. The city may not have been Heaven, but it was Heaven enough for him. Morning to evening, he listened to his customers as they shared the latest news about the war. The Americans and the Middle East had resumed hostilities, as had China and Spain and Australia and the Netherlands. Brazil was developing another mutagenic virus, one that would resist the latest antitoxins. Or maybe it was Italy. Or maybe Indonesia. There were so many rumors that it was hard to know for sure.

Now and then, someone who had died only a day or two before would happen into one of the centers of communication—the tavern or the tearoom, the river market or the colonnade—and the legions of the dead would mass around him, shouldering and jostling him for information. It was always the same: "Where did you live?" "Do you know anything about Central America?" "Is it true what they're saying about the ice caps?" "I'm trying to find out about my cousin. He lived in Arizona. His name was Lewis Zeigler, spelled L-E-W-I-S. . . ." "What's happening with the situation along the

African coast—do you know, do you know?" "Anything you can tell us, please, anything at all."

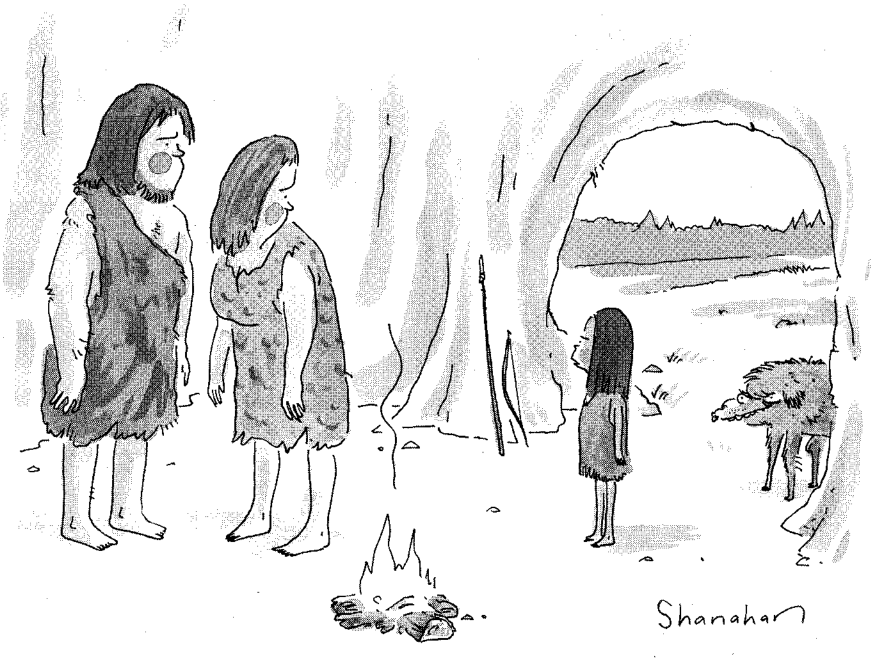
Kiran Patel had sold beads to tourists in the Bombay hotel district for most of a century. She said that there were fewer and fewer travellers to her part of the world, but that this hardly mattered, since there was less and less of her part of the world for them to see. The ivory beads she had peddled as a young woman became scarce, then rare, then finally unobtainable. The only remaining elephants were caged away in the zoos of other countries. In the years just before she died, the "genuine ivory beads" she sold were actually a cream-colored plastic made in batches of ten thousand in Korean factories. This, too, hardly mattered. The tourists who stopped at her kiosk could never detect the difference.

Jeffrey Fallon, sixteen and from Park Falls, Wisconsin, said that the fighting hadn't spread in from the coasts yet, but that the germs had, and he was living proof. "Or not living, maybe, but still proof," he corrected himself. The bad guys used to be Pakistan, and then they were Argentina and Turkey, and after that he had lost track. "What do you want me to tell you?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "Mostly I just miss my girlfriend." Her name was Tracey Tipton, and she did this thing with his earlobes and the notched edge of her front teeth that made his entire body go taut and buzz like a guitar string. He had never given his earlobes a second thought until the day she took them between her lips, but now that he was dead he thought of nothing else. Who would have figured?

The man who spent hours riding up and down the escalators in the Ginza Street Shopping Mall would not give his name. When people asked him what he remembered about the time before he died, he would only nod vigorously, clap his hands together, and say, "Boom!," making a gesture like falling confetti with his fingertips.

The great steel-and-polymer buildings at the heart of the city, with their shining glass windows reflecting every gap between every cloud in the sky, gave way after a few hundred blocks to buildings of stone and brick and wood. The change was so gradual, though, and the streets so full of motion, that you could walk for hours before you realized that the architecture had transformed itself around you. The sidewalks were lined with movie theatres, gymnasiums, hardware stores, karaoke bars, basketball courts, and falafel stands. There were libraries and tobacconists. There were lingerie shops and dry cleaners. There were hundreds of churches in the city—hundreds, in fact, in every district—pagodas, mosques, chapels, and synagogues. They stood sandwiched between vegetable markets and video-rental stores, sending their crosses, domes, and minarets high into the air. Some of the dead, it was true, threw aside their old religions, disgusted that the afterlife, this so-called great beyond, was not what their lifetime of worship had promised them. But for every person who lost his faith there was someone else who held fast to it, and someone else again who adopted it. The simple truth was that nobody knew what would happen to them after their time in the city came to an end, and just because you had died without meeting your God was no reason to assume that you wouldn't one day.

This was the philosophy of José Tamayo, who offered himself once a week as a custodian to the Church of the Sacred Heart. Every Sunday, he waited by the west door until the final service was over and the crowd had dissolved back into the city, and then he swept the tile floor, polished the pews and the altar, and vacuumed the cushions by the Communion rail. When he was finished, he climbed carefully down the seventeen steps in front of the building, where the blind man stood talking about his journey through the desert, and made his way across the street to his apartment. He had damaged his knee once during a soccer match, and ever since then he felt a tiny exploding star of pain above the joint whenever he extended his leg. The injury had not gone away, even after the crossing, and he did not like to walk too far on it. This was why he had chosen to work for the Church of the Sacred Heart: it was the closest church he could find. He had, in fact, been raised a Methodist, in the only non-Catholic congregation in Juan Tula. He frequently thought of the time he stole a six-pack of soda from the church storage closet with the boys in his Sunday-school class. They had heard the teacher coming and shut the door, and a thin ray of light had come slanting through the jamb, illuminating the handle of a cart filled with folding chairs—forty or fifty of them, stacked together in a long, tight interdigitation. What José remembered was staring at this cart and listening to his teacher's footsteps as the bubbles of soda played over the surface of his tongue, sparking



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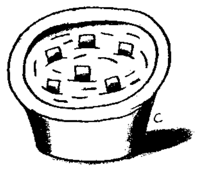
and collapsing against the roof of his mouth.

The dead were often surprised by such memories. They might go weeks and months without thinking of the houses and neighborhoods they had grown up in, their triumphs of shame and glory, the jobs and routines and hobbies that had slowly eaten away their lives, yet the smallest, most inconsequential episode would leap into their thoughts a hundred times a day, like a fish smacking its tail on the surface of a lake. The old woman who begged for quarters in the subway remembered eating a meal of crab cakes and horseradish on a dock by Chesapeake Bay. The man who lit the gas lamps in the theatre district remembered taking a can of beans from the middle of a supermarket display pyramid and feeling a flicker of pride and then a flicker of amusement at his pride when the other cans did not fall. Andreas Andreopoulos, who had written code for computer games all forty years of his adult life, remembered leaping to pluck a leaf from a tree, and opening a fashion magazine to smell the perfume inserts, and writing his name in the condensation on a glass of beer. They preoccupied him—these formless, almost clandestine memories. They seemed so much heavier than they should have been, as if that were where the true burden of his life's meaning lay. He sometimes thought of piecing them together into an autobiography, all the toy-size memories that replaced the details of his work and family, and leaving everything else out. He would write it by hand on sheets of unlined notebook paper. He would never touch a computer again.



There were places in the city where the crowds were so swollen you could not move without pressing into some arm or hip or gut. As the numbers of the dead increased, these areas became more and more common. It was not that the city had no room for its inhabitants but that when they chose to herd together they did so in certain places, and the larger the population grew the more congested these places became. The people who were comfortable in their privacy learned to avoid them. If they wanted to visit the open square in the monument district, or the fountains in the neon district, they would have to wait until the population diminished. This always seemed to happen in times of war or plague or famine.

The park beside the river was the busiest of the city's busy places, with its row of white pavilions and its long strip of living grass. Kite venders and soft-drink stands filled the sidewalks, and saddles of rock carved the water into dozens of smoothly rounded coves. There came a day when a man with a thick gray beard and a tent of bushy hair stumbled out of one of the pavilions and began to bump into the shoulders of the people around him. He was plainly disoriented, and it was obvious to everyone who saw him that he had just passed through the crossing. He said that he was a virologist by profession. He had spent the last five days climbing the branches of an enormous maple tree, and his clothing was tacked to his skin with sap. He seemed to think that everybody who was in the park had also been in the tree with him. When someone asked him how he had died, he drew in his breath and paused for a moment before he answered. "That's right, I died. I have to keep reminding myself. They finally did it, the sons of bitches. They found a way to pull the whole thing down." He twisted a plug of sap from his beard. "Hey, did any of you notice some sort of thumping noise inside the tree?"

It was not long after this that the city began to empty out.

The single-room office of the *L. Sims News & Speculation Sheet* was in one of the city's oldest buildings, constructed of chocolate-colored brick and masses of silver granite. Streamers of pale-yellow moss trailed from the upper floors, hanging as low as the ledge above the front door, and each morning, as Luka Sims stood cranking away at his mimeograph machine, sunlight filtered through the moss outside his window and the room was saturated with a warm, buttery light. Sometimes he could hardly look out at the city without imagining that he was gazing through a dying forest.

By seven o'clock, he would have printed a few thousand copies of his circular and taken them to the River Road Coffee Shop, where he would hand them out to the pedestrians. He liked to believe that each person who took one passed it on to someone else, who read it and passed it on to someone else, who read it and passed it on to someone else, but he knew that this was not the case. He always saw at least a few copies in the trash on his way home, the paper gradually uncrinkling in the sun. Still, it was not unusual for him to look inside the coffee shop and see twenty or thirty heads bent over copies of the latest *Sims Sheet*. He had been writing fewer stories about the city recently and more about the world of the living, stories he assembled from interviews with the recent dead, most of whom were victims of what they called "the epidemic." These people tended to blink a lot—he noticed that. They squinted and rubbed their eyes. He wondered if it had anything to do with the virus that had killed them.

Luka saw the same faces behind the coffee-shop window every day. "HUNDREDS EXPOSED TO VIRUS IN TOKYO. NEW EPICENTERS DISCOVERED IN JOHANNESBURG, COPENHAGEN, PERTH." Ellison Brown, who prepared the baked desserts in the kitchen, always waited for Luka to leave before he glanced at the headlines. His wife had been a poet of the type who liked to loom nearby with a fretful look on her face while he read whatever she had written that day, and there was nothing that bothered him more than feeling that he was being watched. "INCUBATION PERIOD LESS THAN FIVE HOURS. EXPOSURE AT NOON, MORTALITY AT MIDNIGHT." Charlotte Sylvain would sip at her coffee as she scanned the paper for any mention of Paris. She still considered the city her home town, though she had not been there in fifty years. Once, she saw the word "Seine" printed in the first paragraph of an article and her fingers tightened involuntarily around the page, but it was only a misprint of the word "sienna," and she would never see her home again. "VIRUS BECOMES AIRBORNE, WATERBORNE. TWO BILLION DEAD IN ASIA AND EASTERN EUROPE." Mie Matsuda Ryu was an enthusiast of word games. She liked to read the *Sims Sheet* twice every morning, once for content and once for any hidden patterns she could find—palindromes, anagrams, the letters of her own name scrambled inside other words. She never failed to spot them. " 'TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR BUG' CROSSES ATLANTIC. FATALITY RATE NEARING ONE HUNDRED PER CENT."

The people who went knocking on the doors of the city began to notice something unusual. The evangelists and travelling salesmen, the petitioners and census takers, they all said the same thing: the numbers of the dead were shrinking. There were empty rooms in empty buildings that had been churning with bodies just a few weeks before. The streets were not so crowded anymore. It was not that people were no longer dying. In fact, there were more people dying than ever. They arrived by the thousands and the hundreds of thousands, every minute of every hour, whole houses and schools and neighborhoods of them. But, for every person who made it through the crossing, two or three seemed to disappear. Russell Henley, who sold brooms that he lashed together from cedar branches and hanks of plastic fibre, said that the city was like a pan with a hole in it. "No matter how much water you let in, it keeps pouring right through." He ran a stall in the monument district, where he assembled his brooms, marketing them to the passing crowds, which barely numbered in the low hundreds these days. If the only life they had was bestowed upon them by the memories of the living, as Russell was inclined to believe, what would happen when the rest of the living were gathered into the city? What would happen, he wondered, when that other room, the larger world, had been emptied out?

Unquestionably, the city was changing. People who had perished in the epidemic came and went very quickly, sometimes in a matter of hours, like a mid-spring snow that blankets the ground at night and melts away as soon as the sun comes up. A man arrived in the pine district one morning, found an empty storefront, painted a sign in the window with colored soap ("SHERMAN'S CLOCK REPAIR. FAST AND EASY. OPENING SOON"), then locked the door and shuffled away and never returned. Another man told the woman he had stayed the night with that he was going to the

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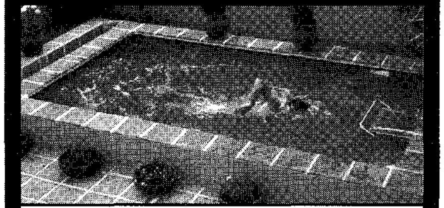

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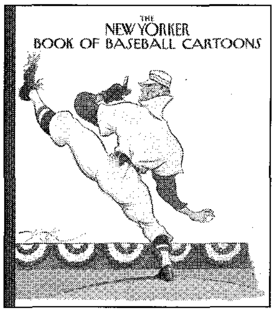

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FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 19•20•21

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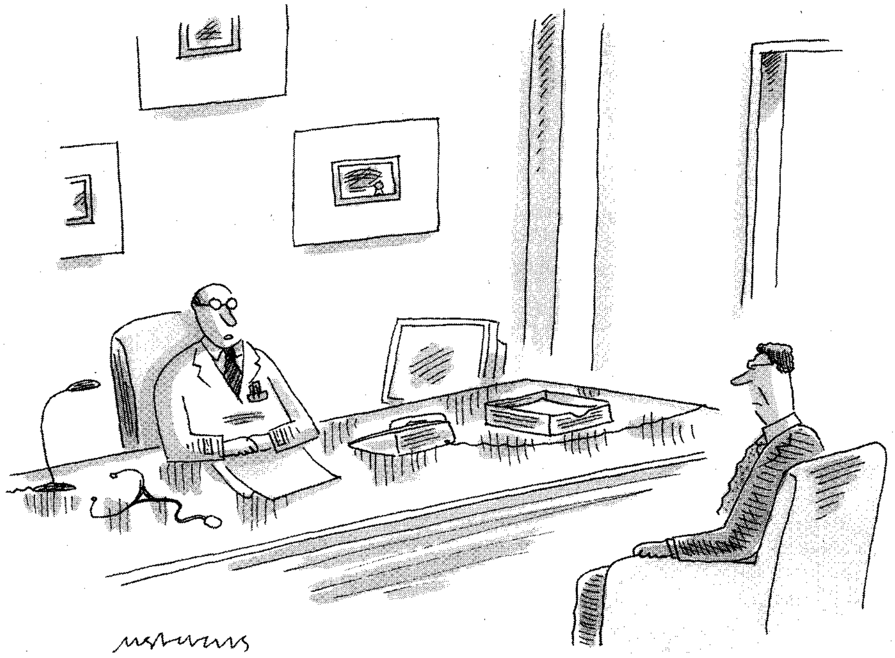
kitchen for a glass of water, and when she called to him a few minutes later he did not answer. She searched the apartment for him—the window beside her dressing table was open, as though he had climbed out onto the balcony—but he was nowhere to be found. The entire population of a small Pacific island appeared in the city on a bright windy afternoon, congregated on the top level of a parking garage, and were gone by the end of the day.

But it was the people who had been in the city the longest who most felt the changes. While none of them knew—or had ever known—how much time they had in the city, or when that time would come to an end, there had usually been a rhythm to their tenure, certain things a person could expect: after finishing the crossing, you found a home and a job and a company of friends, ran out six or seven decades, and while you could not raise a family, for no one aged, you could always assemble one around you.

Mariama Ekwensi, for one, had made her home on the ground floor of a small house in the white clay district for almost thirty years. She was a tall, rangy woman who had never lost the bearing of the adolescent girl she had once been, so dazed and bewildered by her own growth. The batik cotton dresses she wore were the color of the sun in a child's drawing, and her neighbors could always spot her coming from several blocks away. Mariama was a caretaker at one of the city's many orphanages. She thought of herself as a good teacher but a poor disciplinarian, and it was true that she often had to leave her children under the watch of another adult in order to chase after one who had taken off running. She read to the smaller children, books about long voyages, or about animals who changed shape, and she took the older ones to parks and museums and helped them with their homework. Many of them were badly behaved, with vocabularies that truly made her blush, but she found such problems beyond her talents. Even when she pretended to be angry with the children, they were clever enough to see that she still liked them. This was her predicament. There was one boy in particular, Philip Walker, who would light out toward the shopping district every chance he got. He seemed to think it was funny to hear her running along behind him, huffing and pounding away, and she never caught up with him until he had collapsed onto a stoop or a bench somewhere, gasping with laughter. One day, she followed him around a corner and chased him into an alley and did not come out the other end. Philip returned to the orphanage half an hour later. He could not say where she had gone.

Ville Tolvanen shot pool every night at the bar on the corner of Eighth and Vine. The friends he had at the bar were the same friends he had known when he was alive. There was something they used to say to each other when they went out drinking in Oulu, a sort of song they used to sing: "I'll meet you when I die / At that bar on the corner of Eighth and Vine." One by one, then, as they passed away, they found their way to the corner of Eighth and Vine, walked gingerly, skeptically, through the doors of the bar, and caught sight of one another by the pool tables, until gradually they were all reassembled. Ville was the last of the group to die, and finding his friends there at the bar felt almost as sweet to him as it had when he was young. He clutched their arms and they clapped him on the back. He insisted on buying them drinks. "Never again," he told them. And though he could not finish the sentence, they all knew what he meant. He was grinning to keep his eyes from watering over, and someone tossed a peanut shell at him, and he tossed one back, and soon the floor was so covered with the things that it crunched no matter where they put their feet. For months after he died, Ville never missed a single night at the tables—and so when he failed to appear one night his friends went out looking for him. They headed straight for the room he had taken over the hardware store down the street, where they used their fists to bang on the door and then dislodged the lock with the sharp edge of a few playing cards. Ville's shoes were inside, and his wristwatch, and his jacket, but he was not.

Ethan Hass, the virologist, drank not in the bars but from a small metal flask that he carried on his belt like a Boy Scout canteen. He had been watching the developments in his field for thirty years before he died, reading the



"You appear to be suffering from the effects of secondhand litigation."

• •

journals and listening to the gossip at the conventions, and it sometimes seemed to him that every government, every interest group, every faction in the world was casting around for the same thing, a perfect virus, one that followed every imaginable vector, that would spread through the population like the expanding ring of a raindrop in a puddle. It was clear to him now that somebody had finally succeeded in manufacturing it. But how on earth had it been introduced? He couldn't figure it out. The reports from the recently dead were too few, and they were never precise enough. One day, he locked himself in the bathroom of the High Street Art Museum and began to cry, insistently, sobbing out something about the air and the water and the food supply. A security guard was summoned. "Calm down, guy. There's plenty of air and water for you out here. How about you just open the door for us?" The guard used his slowest, most soothing voice, but Ethan only shouted "Everybody! Everything!" and turned on the faucets of the sinks, one by one. He would not say anything else, and when the guard forced the door open a few minutes later he was gone.

It was as though a gate had been opened, or a wall thrown down, and the city was finally releasing its dead. They set out from its borders in their multitudes, and soon the parks, the bars, the shopping centers were all but empty.

One day, not long after the last of the restaurants had closed its doors, the blind man was standing on the steps of the church, waiting for someone who would listen to his story. No one had passed him all day long, and he was beginning to wonder if the end had come once and for all. Perhaps it had happened while he was sleeping, or during the half minute early that morning when he had thought he smelled burning honey. He heard a few car horns honking from different quarters of the city, and then, some twenty minutes later, the squealing of a subway train as its brakes gripped the tracks, and then nothing but the wind aspirating between the buildings, lingering, and finally falling still. He listened hard for a voice or a footstep, but he could not make out a single human sound.

He cupped his hands around his mouth. "Hello?" he shouted. "Hello?" But no one answered.

He experienced an unusual misgiving. He brought his hand to his chest. He was afraid that the heartbeat he heard was his own. ♦

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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE YEARS WITH THURBER

The man and his letters.

BY ROBERT GOTTLIEB

Is the name of James Thurber, once a byword for humor, slowly slipping from the national consciousness? Only half a dozen years ago, the Library of America published a thousand-page volume of his work, edited by Garrison Keillor, and very recently a massive collection of his letters has appeared. But, despite all this official appreciation, a doubt arises: Is Thurber still being widely read and enjoyed? The nod from the Library of America was meant as a coronation, but nobody can be funny for a thousand pages, and Thurber's writing—occasional by definition—resists so exhaustive and formal an act of exhumation and canonization.

As for the new collection of his letters, your pleasure in it will probably depend on how much of the Thurber literature you've been exposed to—I mean the literature about him, not the literature by him. If this is your first dip, you're likely to be both fascinated and disturbed. But if you've been exposed to Harrison Kinney's twelve-hundred-page biography, or Burton Bernstein's five-hundred-page biography, or even Neil A. Grauer's derivative two-hundred-page biography, to say nothing of Brendan Gill's rancid portrait of Thurber in "Here at The New Yorker" and a previous collection of letters co-edited by Thurber's second wife, Helen, you're in familiar territory. Because the structure of the new book is chronological, it reads like a highly selective and unsatisfactory autobiography, and because the Kinney and Bernstein biographies made such heavy use of the letters, it can't help echoing them. Still, although "The Thurber Letters"—edited by Mr. Kinney "with Rosemary A. Thurber," Thurber's daughter (Simon & Schuster; $40)—doesn't add much to the over-all story, it does add to our understanding of this complicated and tormented man.

Thurber's letters aren't crafted, ornamented, polished. They're completely natural—as relaxed as conversation. They're the overflow of a professional writer to whom writing is so basic, so easy, and so necessary that he can't stop just because he's not being paid for it. Any experience or idea that comes to him is instantly down on paper and in the mail. One starts to get the impression that nothing was real for Thurber until he had written it out, and that the writing was more important to him than whatever it was he was writing about. Even when his sight was almost entirely gone, he was scrawling away, a few words to a page. "There is no substitute for the delight of writing," he wrote to a friend. And he told Harold Ross, "If I couldn't write, I couldn't breathe."

The letters don't stint; they rush forward headlong, especially when he's writing to people he cares about, like E. B. White, to whom, at least in the early years, he burbles on and on, throwing in anything and everything that's happened to him. In a letter written from Paris in 1937, for instance, he informs White that "what we need is writers who deal with the individual plight and who at the same time do not believe in [Walter] Lippmann"; that "David Garnett has come out with the quiet announcement that I am the most original writer living"; that his brother William is "losing one of his testicles at 43"; that he has figured out a way to bring Helen fresh orange juice every morning from the Café de Flore; that he hasn't had a common cold "since [Colonel] House and [Woodrow] Wilson were friends"; that he's arranged it so "that when the bombs start to fall Helen will lean out the window and say, 'Cut that out! My husband is trying to write a letter!' "; that H. G. Wells "has got the idea that he is three or four writers"; that "the sheep tick knows what he is doing"; that he's been told that Rosemary "looks like me now, poor child, but then it's possible for a girl to look like Ross or [Joel] Sayre and still be lovely. This is one of God's great dispensations." And he adds—as if we hadn't noticed—that "this letter has not held together in any way." Yet it does hold together, through its high spirits and sureness of touch. Even at top speed and at his most offhand, Thurber can hardly put a word wrong.

His need to communicate by letter revealed itself from the start. Through his early and mid-twenties, he was pouring out his heart to his closest friend, Elliott Nugent, who had rescued him from failure and oblivion at Ohio State University. Nugent—who went on to become a successful actor, director, and playwright (he and Thurber were to co-write the hit play "The Male Animal")—was by far the more worldly of the two young men, and it's painful to imagine what he made of Thurber's endless callow effusions about his sadly ineffectual love life, torn between two women with neither of whom he had more than a fantasy relationship. "I once wrote this wonderful girl a letter, 7 years after we parted back in the grammar grades,—or three years ago. I was lifted aloft to places where cherubim twitters by a 12 page answer from Colorado Springs asking me to write again which I did in a way that set me back 8 cents for postage of the Rellum, addressed, as

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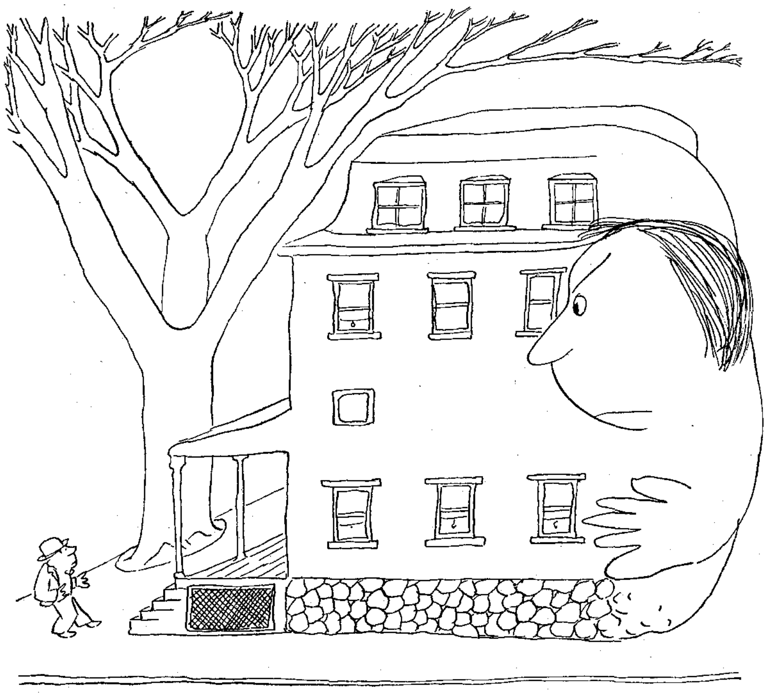
The quintessential New Yorker writer and artist: the humorist James Thurber in 1944. Photograph by Irving Penn.

she requested, care of her sister 203 Underwood St., Zanesville, Ohio. No response. And, quite like the lackadaisical Thurber, I let it ride from thence to nownce." By the time he's twenty-four and working in Paris as a code clerk in the American Embassy, his style has detumesced somewhat, he's grown marginally more sophisticated, and, around the time of his twenty-fifth birthday, he finally loses his virginity—to a girl from the Folies-Bergère. (Sex, for him, meant Bad Girls; Good Girls were for worship.)

We're not spared the embarrassment of reading his missives—poems and all—to one of his early flames, Eva Prout; it's unimaginable that a twenty-five-year-old man today could commit such sentimental stuff to paper. But then Thurber was a compulsive correspondent as well as a sentimental one, churning out streams of letters not only to Eva but to his family and his friends, even to comparative strangers. (The Kinney collection includes a four-thousand-word letter full of jokes and high jinks to three American Red Cross girls he knew casually in Paris who in 1919 were off travelling in "Roumania.") And by now it's evident that straightforward statement of fact is not what really interests him: anecdotes, impressions, feelings are amplified, dramatized—automatically turned into stories meant to amuse. Even the reporting he was doing for the Paris *Tribune* was often embellished when not totally invented.

But though Thurber may by temperament have been more fabulist than reporter, the years he put in as a journalist in both Europe and America had provided him with a reporter's skills, so that by 1927, the year he hooked up with the fledgling *New Yorker*—he was already in his thirties—he had everything he needed to succeed there: rampant humor, the power of close observation, and a limitless capacity to turn out copy. And as someone who had always depended on strong mentors—Nugent, teachers, newspaper editors—he was fortunate to find at the magazine two men who would help shape and direct his obvious talents: his young office mate, E. B. White, already a fixture, and Harold Ross, the Editor, who would drive him nuts while demanding, and getting, the best he had to offer.



JAMES THURBER, 3/23/35; 8/19/39

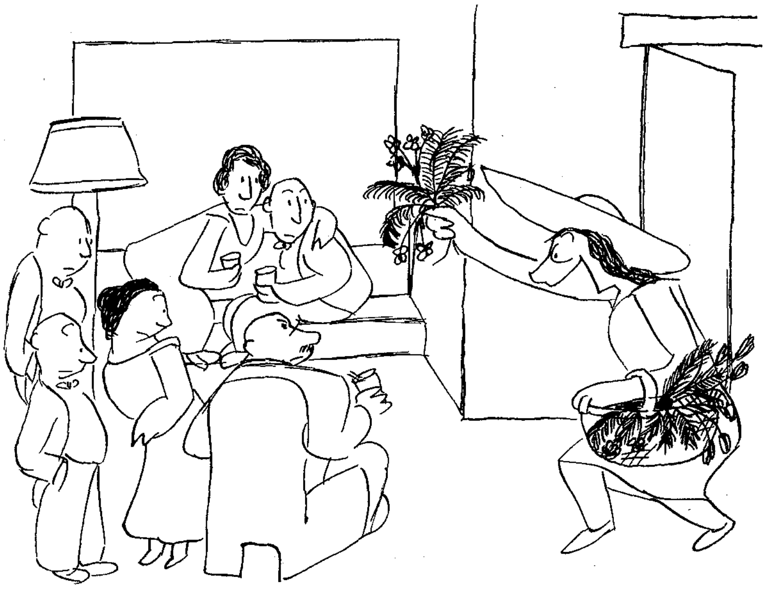
The New Yorker was the turning point, the crucial element, in Thurber's life, just as he was a crucial element in the magazine's development. But at the start no one knew quite what to do with him. Ross, as always, was in search of an administrative editor who could, through some arcane magic, make sense of the chaos that he thrived on, hiring a procession of young men ill-equipped to fill this slot—"Hell, I hire anybody"—then quickly dumping them. Given his anarchic spirit, Thurber was undoubtedly the least plausible of these luckless candidates. Besides, he knew that he was first, last, and always a writer. Ross persisted, though, and Thurber was kept busy rewriting and processing other writers' copy, being paid a small salary without extra compensation for any pieces of his own that found their way into the magazine.

From the beginning, his model as a writer—and Ross's—was White, for the clarity, precision, and intelligence of his prose. And Andy White went from being a colleague (who told him frostily "I always eat alone") to a pal to a friend to (almost) a soul mate. It was White who literally picked up Thurber's discarded drawings of men, women, and dogs (and the famous seal) from the floor and forced them down the collective throat of the art department. But though Thurber and White wrote a book together—the successful "Is Sex Necessary?," in 1929—they were very unalike. Thurber was gregarious, a prankster (Ross invariably fell for his fake phone calls in bizarre accents), almost a rowdy; White was cautious, dispassionate. As one contemporary friend put it, "Andy was fearful of life. Jim was warm and involved with life." Nevertheless, they made a formidable, and happy, team. These early years of *The New Yorker*, when the course of the magazine was being set by the Founding Fathers (the two young men, together with Ross and Wolcott Gibbs and a few others) plus the Founding Mother (Katharine Angell, who was to marry White), became for Thurber, in retrospect, a golden age.

At first, he was writing Talk of the Town as well as humor—he wrote hundreds of Talk pieces in all, industriously making more out of less, and not unfrequently something out of nothing. (Typical starts to his Talk pieces from the late twenties: "The new Reptile Hall was officially opened a few days ago in the Museum of Natural History and we visited it amidst a group of youngsters who kept crying 'Good night!' and their mothers who kept murmuring 'Mercy!' " And "Older residents around Gramercy Park were astonished to find one night in April no lights in Allaire's. A padlock hung on the hospitable doors of the famous old *bierhalle*.") He went on turning out this kind of thing until the mid-thirties, but by then the two main preoccupations of his writing career had emerged: the relations between men and women, and the remembrance of his past.

In 1922, Thurber had married Althea Adams, a strong-minded young woman he had met the year before, when she was still an undergraduate at Ohio State. Althea knew exactly how she wanted to live. It was at her persuasion that he abandoned his not very exciting journalism career in his home town, Columbus, Ohio, and went back to Europe for a year or so, and it was at her urging that the couple eventually moved to Connecticut, so that she could raise dogs. "She always scared me," he confessed, and Helen Thurber, wife No. 2, said, "Jamie in that period needed somebody strong to steer him, and Althea was strong." (Not that Helen was a pussycat.) More and more, Jamie and Althea lived apart, perhaps not surprisingly in light of Althea's blurted-out confidence to Joel Sayre in 1926: "I've been married four years and I'm still a virgin." ("I worried about their marriage after that," Sayre remarked.) There was talk of permanent separation, but in 1931 Althea gave birth to Rosemary, providing Thurber with one of the great consolations of his life, and stitching the marriage back together for a while—they didn't divorce for another four years. Then he quickly married Helen Wismer, one of several girls he had been seeing for a while, but not THE girl. That was Ann Honeycutt, with whom he carried on a passionate but unconsummated love affair for years.

Honeycutt was a Southern firecracker, a pal to many of the *New Yorker* gang (for a short while, she was married to St. Clair McKelway, a prominent contributor), and she probably understood Thurber as well as anyone ever did. Their relationship was one of clashes and frustration, and he finally and in anguish grasped that it was never going to work out. Definitively breaking with her in May, 1935, he wrote, "I suppose I should get married and that you should never get married. . . . I wouldn't try to conceal from you the fact that the final realization that you didn't want me was the hardest thing I have ever had to bear." A month later, he married Helen, and the marriage stuck.



"I come from haunts of coot and hern!"

To a great extent, Helen took over his life, particularly his financial life, becoming a dragon about fees, copyrights, contracts. But she also tended him, dealt gently with his family back in Columbus, was an unwicked stepmother to Rosemary, and—most important—shepherded him through the physical world when his eyesight finally gave out. When he was seven, his older brother, William, had accidentally shot him in the left eye with an arrow; he not only lost that eye but was left with only forty per cent of his normal vision in the other—until, despite a series of drastic operations, that was gone, too, and he was blind. "My seeing-eye wife," he called Helen.

The Thurber woman is generally thought of as bossy, angry, unreasonable, whether encountered in his stories—most famously "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and "The Catbird Seat"—or in cartoons, like the one that shows a meek little husband approaching a house that is morphing into a huge, threatening wife. But his treatment of women is more nuanced than one might suppose. There's an early series of stories about a Mr. and Mrs. Monroe, clearly based on his life with Althea, which depict the husband as feckless and impossible, as often as not justifying his wife's impatience with him. And there's "The Case of Dimity Ann," in which a drunken writer husband, late at night, torments his wife with an account of having once tied up a cat in the cord of his dressing gown. "I hid in a closet," he tells her, grinning, "and then I came creeping out on all fours, calling, 'Kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty, kitty—' " "Scat!" his put-upon wife cries suddenly, "as much to her own surprise as to his." And then, realizing that for once she's had the last word, "she ran up the stairs as lightly and swiftly as a girl, restraining a new and unexpected impulse to clasp her hands above her head and wave them, in triumphant greeting to the invisible wives of all the writers in the world." Thurber knew very well just how nasty he could be.

When it comes to his past, however—to his family, his childhood, his life in Columbus—he's never nasty. This is the material that seems closest to his heart, and he returns to it lovingly again and again. The pieces everybody knows—the most famous being "The Night the Bed Fell," "The Day the Dam Broke," "The Dog That Bit People," "The Night the Ghost Got In"—appeared in 1933 as "My Life and Hard Times," and Thurber doesn't bother to disguise that he is exaggerating the humor of what really went on. And why not? This was comedy, not autobiography. His father got it exactly right when he remarked about these stories, "But pshaw! Jamie is a great hand to enlarge on those little things that used to happen when he was a kid."

Trouble arose, however, in the early

fifties, when he returned to the family in the *New Yorker* material that became "The Thurber Album." This time, the writing was straightforward, and his brother Robert, in particular, took violent exception to a lot of what was said, especially to the way their father was portrayed. The senior Thurber had been a good-natured, hardworking man who barely made a go of it in Ohio's political world; no one could have called him a ball of fire. The ball of fire was Mame, the mother, who had wanted to be an actress and remained a life-lover, a git-up-and-goer, and, like her celebrated son, a brilliant and daring practical joker. Both brothers, William and Robert, inherited their father's lack of galvanic energy, and essentially did very little with their lives—Jamie helped support them (as well as his parents) until his death. His letters to them all are kind and attentive, and his visits to Columbus were fairly regular, if not frequent, but the family reaction to "The Thurber Album" suggests that a dynamic of anger and resentment had always underlain the amiable surface. Robert's criticisms may seem petty and pointless—Jamie hadn't, for instance, praised their father's beautiful penmanship!—but the rift was deep. To placate Robert and the others, Thurber modified certain aspects of the *New Yorker* pieces for the book, but it would be a long time before the family was reconciled.

Luckily, Mame Thurber, the member of the family who meant most to Jamie, quickly regained her composure. She had always enjoyed her son's celebrity, making happy visits to New York to see him, and she was always concerned about his well-being. In 1940, in an attempt to be useful, she wrote to his eye surgeon, not only offering one of her own eyes in case a graft might be possible (she was seventy-four) but providing the "ideal" astrological moment for an upcoming operation—and enclosing a stamp for a return letter. Harold Ross, Thurber tells us in "The Years with Ross," thought Mame was wonderful, while Mame worried about Ross's health: "You see, he's Scorpio, and with his moon where it is, his weak spot will always be his chest." Besides, the two of them shared a deep interest in the magazine *True Detective*.

Thurber's preoccupation with his past, and with *the* past, goes beyond mining his childhood for his work. His pieces about those closest to him radiate out into memories and reveries of *their* connections. In one of his most heartfelt and touching reconstructions, "Daguerreotype of a Lady," he restores to life "Aunt Margery" Albright, a warmhearted, fiercely protective woman who nurtured him throughout his childhood. Not only does he recall the objects that populated her house—"the card table, bought for a dollar or two before the Civil War," "the two brown plaster-of-Paris spaniels that stood on either end of the mantel," "the green tobacco tin that Aunt Margery used for a button box"—but he remembers "all the tenants of the front room upstairs, who came and went: Vernie, who clerked in a store; the fabulous Doc Marlowe, who made and sold Sioux Liniment and wore a ten-gallon hat with kitchen matches stuck in the band; the blonde and mysterious Mrs. Lane, of the strong perfume and the elegant dresses; Mr. Richardson, a guard at the penitentiary, who kept a gun in his room." He even memorializes visitors to Aunt Margery's house: "Mrs. Straub, who babbled of her children—her Clement and her Minna; Joe Chickalilli, a Mexican rope thrower . . . and the Gammadingers and their brood, who lived on a farm in the Hocking Valley." He's not just revisiting people from the past; he's rescuing them—rescuing Clement and Minna and Joe Chickalilli and the Gammadingers from oblivion.

But even as Thurber was engaged in this act of retrieval and homage, his daily life was rapidly deteriorating. By the early fifties, he could not see to draw or read or write; various ailments—Graves' disease, a burst appendix, pneumonia—were buffeting him (at one point, he estimated that Helen and he had endured fourteen operations since they were married); and 1951 brought the calamity of Ross's death. Even before that, though, he had felt that the magazine was changing, and for the worse. Since marrying Helen, he had been complaining about the inequities of the payment system; and in 1949 he had written to Ross that "the curse of our formula editing is that uniformity tends toward desiccation, coldness, and lack of vitality and blood. . . . We are afraid of warmth, as we are afraid of sex and human functions." The attacks on "the now crippled magazine" grew angrier and more intemperate. To William Shawn, Ross's successor, in 1954: "I realize as well as anyone our consternation at anything not monstrously clear to the fourteen-year-old girl for whom some dog said the magazine is written." To *Newsweek* in 1955: "It's a synthetic magazine today." To Katharine White in 1957: "You have made of the *New Yorker* editorial judgment a rigid thing and you have developed a certain sense of false infallibility." To Roger Angell in 1961: "The magazine has become more and more like a university English department, run by lecturers and instructors, rather than a publication conducted by editors."

In person, he was even more outspoken. The one time I met him (I had inherited responsibility for him at Simon & Schuster when, in 1957, my boss, Jack Goodman, one of the few publishers Thurber actually admitted liking, suddenly died), he was incoherent with rage against the magazine in general and Shawn in particular. Thurber and S. J. Perelman had been my heroes in my mid-teens, the immensely successful anthology "The Thurber Carnival" practically my favorite book. Faced now at dinner with a drunken, abusive Thurber—and his somewhat less drunk but equally abusive wife—I was totally thrown; whatever I had expected, it wasn't King Lear in the Italian Pavilion spouting invective about a publication and an editor I so admired. (Perelman, I was to discover, had many of the same complaints about *The New Yorker's* retreat from humor, though he expressed them far more judiciously.)

What stung Thurber most was that so much of his writing was being rejected by the magazine, and by what he was determined to interpret as the dismissive attitude of the new regime. He certainly never established a warm or personal relationship with Shawn, who acknowledged to Harrison Kinney that "Thurber and I were never close. We had very few professional lunches together. . . . We made office space available for Thurber and the Whites whenever they wanted it. They're among the founders of the organization. That fact was never lost on me, whatever Thurber's charges. My response was to turn the other cheek."

The key word here, it seems to me, is "organization"—a word one can't imagine occurring to Harold Ross. What happened at *The New Yorker* is what inevitably happens when a highly personal ma-and-pa operation grows in size and importance until it changes in nature and—because it must—turns into an institution. I observed this same phenomenon at New York City Ballet, at Simon & Schuster, at Random House. There are old-timers who not only ride out the transformation but approve of it and benefit from it; sadly for him, Thurber—like Wolcott Gibbs, like John O'Hara—couldn't bear it. The hugely successful post-Ross *New Yorker* was fortunate in having Shawn to provide the kind of leadership and management it needed to maintain itself at that level, but "management" wasn't a word you could apply to the locomotive that was Ross; he was simply the Boss. And Thurber didn't want organization or management; he wanted the magazine to be the place it had been in the twenties and thirties—his home.

An already ugly situation worsened when, in 1957, Thurber began publishing "The Years with Ross," in *The Atlantic Monthly*. He had written to his editor there that it was "now a great big valentine. . . . Let somebody else write 'The Tears with Ross,' " and to the Whites that it would emerge "*toujours gai*," with the magazine's weaknesses mostly "smoothed over, left out, but not prettified." Nevertheless, many people connected to the magazine felt that it diminished Ross by making him look foolish, and they resented the place Thurber assigned himself, front and center, during the magazine's formative years. He was especially distressed at the increasingly disapproving attitude of the Whites—particularly Katharine—as the *Atlantic* installments appeared. This disapproval was to cloud their relationship for the few remaining years of Thurber's life, eliciting, in a letter to a friend, almost the only negative remark about White I came upon in reading more than thirty years of correspondence: "I have just got a wintry letter from Andy White who, when he is in one of his self-bound phases, is the most selfful of men."

While it's true that "The Years with Ross" gets grumpy at times, and perhaps exaggerates Thurber's contribution to the magazine's early days, it is also a savvy, generous, funny, and loving tribute to his boss, the Gee Whiz Guy. "H. W. Ross," he sums up, "had a world and wealth of warming and wonderful things to look back upon as he lay dying. He had been a great success, he had made hundreds of friends and thousands of admirers, he had contributed something that had not happened before in his country, or anywhere else, to literature, comedy, and journalism, and he was leaving behind him an imposing monument. He had got his frail weekly off the rocky shoals of 1925 and piloted it into safe harbor through Depression and Recession, World War II, and the even greater perils of the McCarthy era. His good ship stood up all the way. He sometimes threatened to quit, and he was at least twice threatened with being fired, but he kept on going like a bullet-torn flag, and nobody captured his colors and nobody silenced his drums." This may be a touch fancy, but it certainly isn't diminishing. Even so, Andy White saw in "The Years with Ross" "a sly exercise in denigration, beautifully concealed in words of sweetness and love."

By this period of Thurber's life, he had become a notoriously unbearable companion and colleague, given to alcoholic tirades, dominating and wrecking social situations. From the beginning, he had on occasion indulged himself in insults and violence, smashing up furniture and friendships. White had said about the younger Thurber, "Jim was good until his third drink and then sometimes he became a madman, tempestuous and foul-mouthed. . . . He was probably slightly insane. But there never was a kinder, nicer friend—when he was sober." Now that kinder friend was rarely in evidence. An English acquaintance found him to be, at least intermittently, "a storming, raging, vituperative madman." His most loyal friend, Jap Gude, acknowledged that "he was totally irrational and abusive." Helen Thurber told Burton Bernstein, "He was, I suppose, paranoid, feuding with the people he loved most. . . . It is very hard to understand somebody—even your own husband—when he's sick in the brain."

It emerged that he had, indeed, been sick in the brain. He suffered from a toxic

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thyroid, and immediately before his death, in 1961, it was discovered that he had a large hematoma; there had also been arteriosclerosis and strokes. But while his senescence may help explain his abnormal behavior, his rage also reflected a fundamentally despairing view of life that burst out of him at times. "I can't hide any more behind the mask of comedy that I've used all my life," he told Elliott Nugent. "People are not funny; they are vicious and horrible—and so is life."

Rereading Thurber, I find his mask of comedy less comic than I did years ago. A good deal of his output comes across as conventional *New Yorker* material, skillfully handled but dated; the comparison that people were always making to Mark Twain no longer seems justifiable. "My Life and Hard Times," however, retains its charm, and there are a number of welcome surprises in the vast body of his work: several powerful stories revealing a state of depression that readers at the time seemed to ignore; hilarious one-offs like "If Grant Had Been Drinking at Appomattox," "The Macbeth Murder Mystery," "File and Forget," "The Pet Department," and a score of others. The straight reporting—accounts of famous crimes, a five-part series, "Soapland," on radio soap opera—is oddly dry. The "Fables for Our Time" and the children's books—"The 13 Clocks," "The Wonderful O," et al.—tend to be too studied and moralistic. (Perversely, Andy White claimed that his favorite Thurber work was "The Last Flower," a maudlin antiwar parable in words and pictures.) Even the parodies of Henry James, the writer to whom Thurber was most strongly drawn throughout his life, lack the easy perfection of Max Beerbohm's "The Mote in the Middle Distance."

The unquestionable achievement remains the amazing, outlandish cartoons and drawings, with their surreal captions: "I come from haunts of coot and hern," "With you I have known peace, Lida, and now you say you're going crazy," "That's my first wife up there, and this is the present Mrs. Harris," "She has the true Emily Dickinson spirit except that she gets fed up occasionally," "What have you done with Dr. Millmoss?," and, of course, "All right, have it your way—you heard a seal bark." These unique works of art still startle and amuse. And who would want to do without the goofy "Famous Poems Illustrated," from "Excelsior" and "Barbara Frietchie" to "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight"?

And then there is Thurber's best-known creation, Walter Mitty. For countless people who haven't read "The Secret Life . . ." or seen the execrable Goldwyn film starring Danny Kaye, the concept of Mitty, the henpecked fantasist of heroism, is standard cultural coin. He gives his name to an essential human type for which we didn't have a name before. Captain Ahab, Huck Finn, Sister Carrie, Babbitt, Gatsby, Scarlett O'Hara, Holden Caulfield are characters we recognize; Mitty is someone we are.

The character of Thurber himself remains elusive, which may be why the value of his letters lies less in their brilliance or their perceptions than in the way they reveal his contrasting qualities. He could be open and sincere, as in most of the letters to Andy White. He could be argumentative, rude, moving, witty. To one old friend he described a lunch, in 1946, at which someone "turned up with the Dowager Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, who told me she had a funny mind, and proved it by urging us all to join hands and make the Russians like us. She then related how she had called, all alone, on the Gromykos to tell them about her dear friends, the late Czar and Czarina, and their nice charming circle. The ten days that shook Mrs. Vanderbilt." His letters to his daughter are tender and concerned. His letters to Ross are provocative, even taunting. He's at his nicest in his letters to his favorite younger couple, Ronnie and Janey Williams, with whom he and Helen spent many vacations in Bermuda. To his brother William, in 1927, he could erupt about marriage: "It's for life. All the tinsel and the glamour and the glory, and soon it all becomes one smelly substance." To his brother Robert, a year later, he could sympathize: "I live in the hopes that the adventure of death is something equal to the adventure of life which is pretty colorful and interesting even if hard. It would seem strange to me if God made such a complicated world and such complicated people and then had no more to offer than blankness at the end"—this in response to the death of Muggs, Robert's beloved dog! (All his letters of condolence, actually, are beautiful, unmannered, and must surely have given comfort.) It's for incidental fascinations like these that we read on and on through the seven hundred and sixty-two pages of "The Thurber Letters."

Unfortunately, the book has not been helpfully edited. There's no apparent guiding principle as to what has been included and what has been left out. There's both too much and too little—many letters repeat each other or make no point, yet letters of considerable interest which appeared in the long-out-of-print Helen Thurber collection or are quoted in the biographies are pointedly omitted. Whole correspondences are ignored. Letters are edited differently from the way they were handled in the earlier books—at least one appears in four different versions, two in the biographies, two in the collections. The running editorial commentary is minimal and bland, with one odd exception: twice, Thurber's feeling for Janey Williams is referred to as "infatuation." But the loving letters to the Williamses, as reprinted by Helen, are habitually addressed to "Dear Children," "Dearest Children," "Dearest Family"—to no one else does he write this way, and it is not the way of infatuation. What agenda, conscious or unconscious, on the part of the editors does this uncharacteristic barb imply? And why are so many of the letters to the Whites excluded, particularly those which reflect trouble in paradise? And why is Helen Thurber's collection barely acknowledged? None of this suggests total editorial disinterestedness.

Thurber wasn't unaware of the possibility that his letters might be published. As early as 1920, when he was in his mid-twenties, he wrote to Nugent, "If anyone should ever want to compile my letters after I am famously dead . . . I fear you would have to censor and expurgate with a free wrist movement." And Helen Thurber prefaces her collection with a prophetic piece by her husband called "The Letters of James Thurber." "The effect of Thurber's letters on his generation," Thurber wrote with his customary rueful acuity, "was about the same as the effect of anybody's letters on any generation; that is to say, nil. It is only when a man's letters are published after his death that they have any effect and this effect is usually on literary critics. Nobody else ever reads a volume of letters and anybody who says he does is a liar." ♦

BOOKS

THE ECSTASIST

Pablo Neruda and his passions.

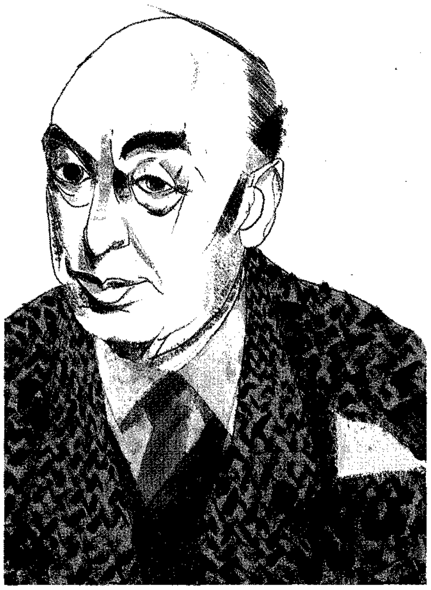
BY MARK STRAND

Pablo Neruda was easily the most prolific and popular of all twentieth-century poets. His collected poems run in excess of thirty-five hundred pages, and his books, which have been translated into dozens of languages, have sold in the millions. His life as a diplomat, an exile, and sometimes a fugitive was not an easy one. The solitude that most writers need in order to work was something that Neruda for the most part was denied. Many of his poems reflect the shifting conditions under which he lived, and have at heart a longing for fixity, whether of place or of idea. At his best, he is among the small group of last century's great poets. Now the most comprehensive selection to date of Neruda's translated poems has been published. "The Poetry of Pablo Neruda" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $40), edited by Ilan Stavans, a professor of Latin-American and Latino culture at Amherst College, is a weighty volume of almost a thousand pages, including an informative introduction, a bibliography of translations into English of Neruda's work, and notes on his life and his poetry.

Born Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto, in 1904, Neruda changed his name to conceal from his father, a railroad worker, the fact that he was a poet. In a memoir (translated by Hardie St. Martin), he writes movingly about an event that might have set in motion his decision, as a teen-ager, to adopt a pseudonym:

> Once, far back in my childhood, when I had barely learned to read, I felt an intense emotion and set down a few words, half rhymed but strange to me, different from everyday language. Overcome by a deep anxiety, something I had not experienced before, a kind of anguish and sadness, I wrote them neatly on a piece of paper. It was a poem to my mother, that is, to the one I knew, the angelic stepmother whose gentle shadow watched over my childhood. I had no way at all of judging my first composition, which I took to my parents. They were in the dining room, immersed in one of those hushed conversations that, more than a river, separate the world of children and the world of grownups. Still trembling after this first visit from the muse, I held out to them the paper with the lines of verse. My father took it absentmindedly, read it absentmindedly, and returned it to me absentmindedly, saying: "Where did you copy this from?" Then he went on talking to my mother in a lowered voice about his important and remote affairs.
>
> That, I seem to remember, was how my first poem was born, and that was how I had my first sample of irresponsible literary criticism.

RICCARDO VECCHIO



Pablo Neruda

By sixteen, Pablo Neruda was publishing poems in school magazines and in the newspapers of his home town, Temuco. At nineteen, he published his first book, "Crepusculario," and within a year he had published "Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair." The book was a sensation, and the young poet who walked the streets of Santiago in a dark broad-brimmed hat and a black cape was suddenly famous. "Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair" begins with an evocation of the beloved's physical presence and ends with acceptance of her absence. Though one can track the downward spiral of love in these poems, it is equally clear that the quality of yearning is what is most important for the poet. So long as his love is absent, he can idealize passion. Here (in a translation by W. S. Merwin) is the beginning of the twentieth poem:

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, "The night is starry and the stars are blue and shiver in the distance."

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.
How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.
To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

The naturalness of these lines, their exuberant and youthful melancholy, their casual repetitions, their over-all simplicity mark Neruda's early style and account in some measure for the continued popularity of the book.

In 1927, Neruda's travels began. He was sent to Rangoon as consul ad honorem, staying in the Far East until 1932, when he returned to Chile. It was there, in the Far East, that Neruda got to work on his cycle of poems "Residence on Earth." The three volumes that make up the cycle contain the poems that he wrote from 1925 to 1945. In the first volume, which covers a wide range of subjects, the melancholy of his earlier poetry becomes more assertive, more colorful, more surreal, and, finally, more anguished. In the poems of the second volume, the gloom continues, but with less obliquity and considerably more charm, as in "Walking Around," which (in Robert Bly's rendering) begins:

It so happens I am sick of being a man.
And it happens that I walk into tailorshops and movie houses
dried up, waterproof, like a swan made of felt
steering my way in a water of wombs and ashes.

By the third volume, it is clear that Neruda's poetry has undergone a profound change. In 1935, he was made consul in Madrid, a post from which he was fired a short time later, because of his involvement in Spanish politics. Neruda was a fierce supporter of the Loyalists, and his poems describe the horrors of war as Spain fell to the forces of Franco.

Neruda's political concerns were not limited to Spain. Later on in the same book, he pays homage to the Soviet Union (something he continued to do for the rest of his life) with an ode to Stalingrad, comparing—in a gesture that seems not only dated but mistaken—its battle against the Nazi onslaught with the struggles of the Spanish Loyalists. Most political poems do not enjoy a long life, and Neruda's are no exception. Their urgency turns out to be as perishable as our memory of the events that inspired them. "Residence on Earth" is a diffuse and transitional enterprise, a bridge between the precocious and unprogrammatic early work and the great works of his maturity.

In 1945, Neruda became a member of the Chilean Communist Party, which was soon outlawed. In 1947, having published scathing criticisms of Chile's President, he was charged with treason and became a fugitive, escaping through the Andes on horseback and resurfacing in France in 1949. By 1950, he was in Mexico, where his sprawling Whitmanesque epic "Canto General," written largely while he was on the run, appeared. It is a lyrical encyclopedia of the New World, proceeding chronologically through three hundred and forty poems and more than five hundred pages. It begins with the world before man arrived. Here (as rendered by Jack Schmitt) is a passage from "The Birds Arrive," a poem in the first section:

A marine mountain flies
toward the islands, a moon
of birds winging South,
over the fermented islands
of Peru.
It's a living river of shade,
a comet of countless
tiny hearts
that eclipse the world's sun
like a thick-tailed meteor
pulsing toward the archipelago.

And at the end of the enraged
sea, in the ocean rain,
the wings of the albatross rise up
like two systems of salt,
establishing in the silence
with their spacious hierarchy
amid the torrential squalls,
the order of the wilds.

The style, with its sweeping hyperboles and celebratory tone, typifies many of the early poems in the "Canto" and reaches its limit in the breathtaking section called "The Heights of Macchu Picchu," in which the poet invites the continent's victimized dead to express themselves through him. He will be their champion, speaking eloquently not only for the victims but for the continent itself. "Canto General" has rarely been matched in its range of subjects, its energy, its imaginative power. It falls down where Neruda substitutes the language of politics for the language of imagination. Even those who agree with his condemnation of the United States, say, and what he believes has been its role in a century-long regime of exploitation and despoilment, will likely feel betrayed by the cornball language of his complaint. Such criticism, however, may be beside the point. Neruda is not a philosophical or meditative poet but one of allegiances and opinions, especially in politics, always wanting us to feel that he identifies with the poor and defenseless, that he knows what is good for them and what is not.

After "Canto General," Neruda's books appeared with greater frequency. Although Chilean authorities rescinded his arrest warrant in 1952, he continued to travel: to Eastern Europe, to the Soviet Union (where he had the dubious honor of winning the Stalin Peace Prize and later served as one of its judges), to Italy (the movie "Il Postino" was inspired by one of his visits there), to Mexico (where he never ceased to feel at home), to France (where he was the Chilean Ambassador in the early seventies), and to many other countries. In the poems he wrote in those years, his largeness of spirit, which in "Canto General" was sometimes cramped by ideology, was given free rein. The "Elemental Odes," three books published between 1954 and 1957, were like nothing else people had seen. With them, Neruda hoped to reach a wider audience than he already had, and his hope was realized. The "Odes" gained immediate and universal praise. They are about the things of everyday life: a lemon, a dead carob tree, a boy with a hare, a stamp album. And they were read by people who had never before paid attention to poetry. Written in very short lines, some as short as a single word, the "Odes" tumble effortlessly down the page in chainlike sentences. Everything is seen in its best light, everything has value, everything deserves to be the subject of a poem. The rhetoric of the "Odes" is as democratic as that of Whitman's "Leaves of Grass." Here (in Margaret Sayers Peden's rendition) is the ecstatic opening of "Ode to a Stamp Album":

Album of perfect stamps!

Butterflies,
ships,
sea shapes, corollas,
leaning towers,
dark eyes, moist and
round as grapes,
album
smooth
as
a
slippery
fish,
with thousands
of glistening
scales,
each page
a
racing
charger
in search of
distant pleasures, forgotten
flowers!

The poem concludes as breathlessly as it began:

Insatiable
spiral,
comet's tail
of all earth's
highways,
dictionary
of the wind,
starstruck album
bulging
with noble
fruits and territories,
treasure keeper
sailing
on its treasure,
garnet
pomegranate,
nomadic
stamp album!

"Extravagaria" (1957-58), which followed the "Odes," is as different from them as they are from "Canto General." Its poems are directed inward, and the voice is more colloquial, more personal, more forgiving of others, and much more relaxed in the claims it makes for itself. There are many beautiful and moving poems in this book, but none more so than the long, valedictory "Autumn Testament," which (as translated by Alastair Reid) concludes:

> From having been born so often
> I have salty experience
> like creatures of the sea
> with a passion for stars
> and an earthy destination.
> And so I move without knowing
> to which world I'll be returning
> or if I'll go on living.
> While things are settling down,
> here I've left my testament,
> my shifting extravagaria,
> so whoever goes on reading it
> will never take in anything
> except the constant moving
> of a clear and bewildered man,
> a man rainy and happy,
> lively and autumn-minded.
>
> And now I'm going behind
> this page, but not disappearing.
> I'll dive into clear air
> like a swimmer in the sky,
> and then get back to growing
> till one day I'm so small
> that the wind will take me away
> and I won't know my own name
> and I won't be there when I wake.
>
> Then I will sing in the silence.

In 1964, nine years before his death, Neruda published his last great book, "Isla Negra," named for the place he called home. Intensely autobiographical, it seems a continuation and amplification of "Extravagaria." Looking deep and serenely into his early and middle years, into lost loves and lost places, Neruda displays an uncharacteristic modesty. The strident rhetoric that continued to surface in much of his previous poetry is missing. Instead, the tone, as in "Extravagaria," is detached, thoughtful, even tender. A good measure of the change would be to compare "The Widower's Tango," from the first volume of "Residence on Earth," which is about an early and disastrous love affair with a woman named Josie Bliss, and the two poems about her in "Isla Negra."

The poems of the more than fifteen books that followed "Isla Negra" represent, with the exception of those of "Art of Birds," a falling off in Neruda's work. Some seem little more than notes for poems, unfinished and haphazard. It is as if he knew that he had little time left—he died of leukemia in 1973, shortly after the Pinochet coup—and were rushing to get everything down at once.

Indeed, because Neruda wrote so much he presents an anthologist with a special problem. Ilan Stavans, in attempting to provide a fair representation and offer a "Neruda that is the sum of his parts," has chosen six hundred poems. Plainly, Stavans is acting more out of generosity than necessity. What might have been preferable is a Neruda who is the sum of his finest parts. By my reckoning, that would still be a big book, but with half as many poems and half as many pages as there are in Stavans's selection. Would all of Neruda's books be represented? Probably not. Would there be as much of "Residence on Earth" and "Canto General"? Probably not.

The other issue here is the one of translation. Stavans has been careful to include almost all of Neruda's major translators, and readers will encounter translation styles that range from the wooden and amusical to the fluid and finely tuned. Fortunately, Neruda's best work has attracted his most gifted translators. Without them, his best might appear to be a good deal less. Examples of clear success are W. S. Merwin's translation of "Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair," Jack Schmitt's translations of "Canto General" and "Art of Birds," Margaret Sayers Peden's translation of the three books of "Elemental Odes," and Alastair Reid's masterly translations of "Extravagaria" and "Isla Negra." These works alone would easily be enough to provide many hours of happy reading.

There is something about Neruda—about the way he glorifies experience, about the spontaneity and directness of his passion—that sets him apart from other poets. It is hard not to be swept away by the urgency of his language, and that's especially so when *he* seems swept away, as in this passage (courtesy of Alastair Reid) describing what he felt when he wrote his first line of poetry:

> And I, tiny being,
> drunk with the great starry
> void,
> likeness, image of
> mystery,
> felt myself a pure part
> of the abyss.
> I wheeled with the stars.
> My heart broke loose with the wind. ♦

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BOOKS

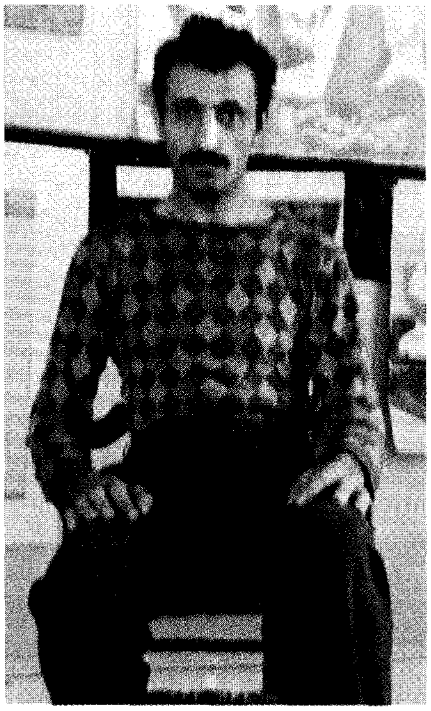
SELF-MADE MAN

How Arshile Gorky changed art.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

A headline in the *Times* of July 22, 1948, read "GORKY'S COUSIN ENDS LIFE." According to the brief obituary that followed, a Russian-born American painter, forty-five years old, had hanged himself in a barn on his property in Sherman, Connecticut. The story was full of errors. The painter, Arshile Gorky, was unrelated to the celebrated Communist writer Aleksey Peshkov, whose pen name was Maxim Gorky. He was probably forty-eight years old, and was born Vosdanig Adoian, in a village in Turkish Armenia. The Sherman property wasn't his—he was too poor to own much of anything—and the building that he selected to die in was a shed. The obit's major errors repeated lies that Gorky regularly told about himself. He kept secret his memories of the massacres, famine, and epidemics that decimated his people during the First World War. He spoke passionately of his mother but rarely of her death in his presence, at the age of thirty-nine, perhaps of starvation. Gorky's widow, Agnes Magruder, who adopted his pet name for her, Mougouch (a term of endearment that meant "little mighty one," he told her), didn't learn until ten years after his death that he was Armenian. But the writer's sketchiness was also due to a profound public ignorance of the American avant-garde in the years before Abstract Expressionism burst upon the world. Even today, when Gorky is enshrined in art history as a crucial figure in the shift of modern-art leadership from Paris to New York, and his paintings resell for millions, a peculiar obscurity clings to him.

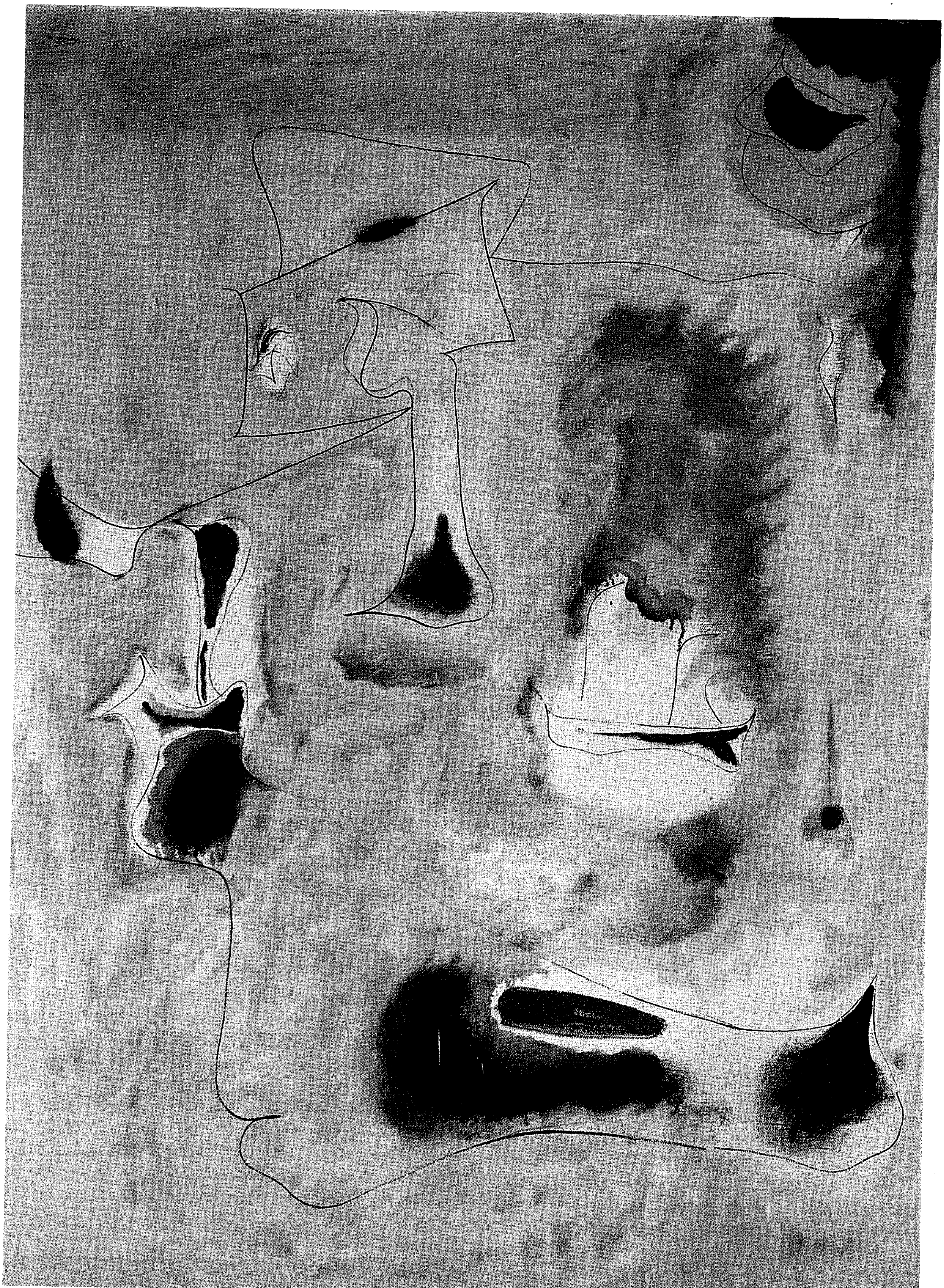
Hayden Herrera is the author of a lively and consequential biography of Frida Kahlo. Her new book, "Arshile Gorky: His Life and Work" (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux; $45), gives us Gorky whole. Herrera is Mougouch's goddaughter, and her monumental, superbly crafted book, thirty-some years in the making, supplants two recent Gorky biographies by authors who also had personal reasons for writing. "From a High Place" (1999) is by Matthew Spender, the son of the poet Stephen and the husband of Maro, the older of Mougouch and Gorky's two daughters. "Black Angel" (2000) is by Nouritza Matossian, who was impelled by her identification with Gorky as a fellow-Armenian. Spender is brisk and engaging, Matossian ardent and often moving, but neither rivals Herrera's comprehensiveness, which is indispensable to a subject who cannot but remain elusive. Beyond being an artist's artist—"a better handler of brush and paint than anyone he was radically influenced by, including Picasso and Miró," in the judgment of Clement Greenberg—Gorky might be termed art's artist: an embodiment of what it means to value the practice of art not wisely but totally. Herrera installs Gorky in the reader's mind as a living, bedevilling, unquenchable enigma.



ALEXANDER SANDOW/COURTESY JIM JORDAN; OPPOSITE: COLLECTION DAVID GEFFEN, L.A.

He was tall, dark, and outrageously handsome, with dramatic black hair and mustache, a full mouth, a prow of a nose, and large, soulful eyes under a wide brow. His hands were long, beautiful, and always in motion. He was animated, cocksure, and often funny, with the air of a melancholy clown. He was puritanical, obsessed with cleanliness, and fatalistic. De Kooning said of Gorky, "He had a difficult life. Everything was kind of gloomy and nothing really worked so good, paintings and life and the money. And he would say, 'Ah, that's another cup of coffee, another piece of pie.' He said it with a certain kind of Armenian accent." The voice of de Kooning, with its traces of his own Dutch patois, is one of many that enchant in the book. It was a generation of wonderful talkers. Jackson Pollock, perhaps thinking of the popular perception of abstract painters as depraved crazies, reacted to Gorky's suicide this way: "Why give a lot of bastards a chance to say 'I told you so'? And you don't sort of take others with you, scarring them like Gorky did with that note when he hung himself, 'Goodbye, dears' or some shit. The guy always did talk too much." (Accounts differ on Gorky's suicide note, scrawled in chalk on a crate; the generally accepted version, which sounds like him, is "Goodbye My Loveds.") Besides being volcanically creative, the tiny downtown art world of the nineteen-forties was very tough.

Gorky grew up in a dark, rich peasant culture that he transposed to the Caucasus in his frequent, lyrical reminiscing about it. His childhood was magical in his memory and the source of numerous motifs in his mature style of surrealistic abstraction: plowshares, apricots, millstones, his mother's embroidered apron. With a biographer's occupational tic, Herrera makes far too much of these references. She interprets a particular shape in his abstract work variously as a boot, buttocks, breasts, a belly, and a butter churn. Gorky's art burns its psychic fuel cleanly and, in my experience, transcends whatever got him going. His famous paintings from a photograph of himself as a boy with his mother (and such others as "Portrait of Myself and My Imaginary Wife") are



Gorky's "Charred Beloved I" (1946) and, opposite, the artist at home, at 36 Union Square, in 1933.

fairer game, and Herrera gives strong descriptions of them; the mother's eyes are "open but unseeing, like the depthless eyes of the dead." Herrera has an enviable eye for Gorky's extraordinary color sense, sorting out the hues of one work as "olives, ochres, aubergines, fleshy pinks, and various browns"—just right. And her characterization of his painterly intelligence, which squares sensual abandon with exacting discipline, can't be topped: "voluptuous and astringent." She firmly grasps his breakthrough of the early forties: a separation of line and colored shape, somewhat like disjoined melody and harmony in jazz, which, as she writes, "aerates the composition so that every part of the painting expands and breathes." This is one painter's biography whose chapters of formal analysis aren't a dutiful slog between anecdotes.

A FISH

No heart was planted in my body.
God knows how that came to be.
But in vouchsafing me that loss, He
Has vouchsafed me courtesy.

—Marianne Moore

Herrera begins her book with a barbaric scene. In 1903, in an ancient monastery church near Lake Van, Turkey, "Arshile Gorky's grandmother, the widow Hamaspiur, had brought the family together to hold a vigil for her youngest son, sixteen-year-old Nishan, who had vanished several days earlier. She suspected that he had been abducted by Kurds, for he had fallen in love with a Kurdish girl whose brother took offense. . . . Only five years earlier, her husband, Sarkis Der Marderosian, the last of a long line of Armenian apostolic priests, had been nailed to the door of the church where he served in Van City." As the family prayed, there was a thud at the door. Outside, they found Nishan's blood-drenched body. Months of wild grief later, "to revenge herself against God," Hamaspiur set the monastery church on fire. "Arshile Gorky would look back with admiration at his grandmother's rebellious spirit," Herrera writes. This tale is family lore, passed on by relatives—notably Gorky's worshipful sister Vartoosh, whose son Karlen Mooradian devoted his life to documenting her hagiographic tales of the artist. Vartoosh and Gorky emigrated together to Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1920 before moving to Providence, where they briefly joined their father, a laborer who had left the family in 1906. Two other sisters came over in 1916. Family members agreed that Gorky, while normal in other ways, never spoke until he was six years old, but they had conflicting memories of his first words: "Mother!"; "No, I won't!"; "I am here"; "I am crying"; or "Money, money, money. That's all you ever talk about, money." Convinced that he was cursed in life, Gorky told friends that his mother had called him "the black one, the unlucky one who will come to a no-good end."

The siege of Van, in 1915, is well documented. Herrera gives a harrowing account of an Armenian district, Aikesdan, that held out against Turkish bombardment and assault for four weeks until it was rescued by Russian troops. The teen-age Gorky—an ammunition carrier to Aikesdan's poorly armed defenders, according to Vartoosh—endured that and other traumas. Why did he suppress them to the extent of denying his Armenian identity? Herrera posits shame and a refusal of victimhood; "starving Armenians" were proverbial in America in the nineteen-twenties. Not to be pitied, Gorky cast himself as a Georgian, at a subsequent cost of embarrassment when he met people who, unlike him, spoke Russian. His résumé referred to experience in Paris, which he had never visited. He plagiarized published poets and artists in love letters. For many years, the look of his art was brazenly secondhand. In the nineteen-twenties, he followed Cézanne almost stroke for stroke. In the thirties, he became a standing joke for hewing so closely to Picasso. Gleeful colleagues needled him when some new Picassos with runny paint contradicted his didactic insistence on the necessity of painting cleanly, like the Spaniard. Gorky responded promptly, "If he drips, I drip." In truth, Gorky's self-imposed apprenticeship to Picasso was the crucible of his greatness. For him, modern art—meaning Picasso, above all—constituted a tradition with formal structures as imperative as perspective was in Renaissance art and chiaroscuro was in Baroque. "Reflection of Picasso is necessary on almost a moral basis," he said. Gorky's late style, which freed painting from the pictorial carpentry of cubism, advanced the tradition from within.

Rejecting his father's expectation that he would be a factory worker, Gorky enrolled in Boston's New School of Design in 1922 and dove into the study of art, partly in schools but mainly in museums. He was savagely proud. When a teacher disparaged his work, he destroyed the canvas that he was working on and walked out of the class for good. He took menial jobs and earned money for a time on the vaudeville stage, chalking likenesses of American Presidents, one a minute, on a blackboard. He later told of swimming out into the Charles River to drown himself and being driven back to shore by the sudden thought, "What about painting?" In 1925, he moved to New York, where he became a charismatic teacher (one of his students was Mark Rothko) and a dashing presence. In 1929, he moved into a space at 36 Union Square which he rented for the rest of his life. Herrera writes that Gorky would stride into the square in "a long black overcoat, a red scarf, and either a proletarian-looking wool knit cap or, on days when he wanted to look prosperous or gangsterish, a black felt hat tilted forward over his eyes." He haunted museums. His favorite Old Masters were Uccello and Ingres, both of them radical engineers of style. One day at the Metropolitan, a woman reacting to his long hair and beard quipped, "Are you Jesus Christ?" He answered, "No, Madam. I am Arshile Gorky." He had settled on the name in Boston, after toying with Archie Gunn and Archie

PHOTO OF MARIO BATALI: MELANIE DUNEA/CPi

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Gorky's self-taught erudition and aggressive principles, however exasperating, carried weight in the small world of New York modern artists. According to de Kooning, Gorky was one of the "Three Musketeers" of the scene, along with Stuart Davis and the shadowy Russian aristocrat John Graham. They were the artists whom nearly everyone talked about and deferred to, although sales and exhibitions were rare. Like many struggling artists in the thirties, Gorky enlisted in the Works Progress Administration. A photograph in Herrera's book shows him confidently explaining his art to a sullenly skeptical Fiorello La Guardia. He won a commission for Newark Airport, and his ten panels of a grand, cubistic mural on themes of aviation were installed there in 1937, to a storm of public controversy. (All but two panels have been lost.) He was a Stalinist to the end—"Stalin was for him a father figure, inviolable," Mougouch told Herrera—in the eccentric notions that passed for his politics, but he disdained Social and Socialist Realism, which he delighted in calling "poor art for poor people." Gorky had and lived a rhapsodic, princely image of the artist. No matter how impoverished, he always somehow managed to lay in more and costlier art supplies than any of his peers and to miss no opportunity for flaunting it.

Gorky "shied away from girls," a friend said. "But girls didn't shy away from him." He idealized and was awkward with women, whom he called, fancifully, "skybabies." He was chary of sex. One former girlfriend told Herrera, "You thought that at the back of his mind, even while having intercourse, he was thinking, 'Oh my goodness, all my strength is going! I should save it up for painting!' " When trouble arose between them, the same woman said, "The only way he could deal with me was to get hysterical and hit me and threaten suicide." He had a few such hapless affairs and a brief marriage, to a model and figure skater named Marny George. Then, in February, 1941, he met the lovely, brilliant nineteen-year-old Agnes Magruder. She was the adventurous daughter of a Navy captain—she worked as a secretary for a Chinese Communist organization—and her modest social elevation tickled Gorky's vanity. Upset by the match, the Magruders provided scant support, but the growing Gorky family spent summers at their country home in Virginia, where Gorky, working outdoors, made several series of astonishing drawings not so much from as inside nature: botanical and insect forms quivering with itchy vitality while participating in an august formal order. Mougouch was self-sacrificing. "Dear Joking Jesus how wonderful it will be when he has a studio really his own," she wrote to her confidante, the collector and artist Jeanne Reynal. She put Gorky first for as long as her sanity could bear it.

The war years brought glamorous European refugees to New York, and Gorky's work strongly impressed many of the artists among them, including Joan Miró and Fernand Léger. He was befriended and influenced, fatefully, by the Chilean-born wunderkind Roberto Matta Echaurren. Shallow but dazzling, Matta had hit on novel effects of untethering line from shape in paintings of sexually voracious, menacing motifs. He was a toast of the uptown art world, where the "imported surrealists," in Clement Greenberg's contemptuous phrase, formed a deluxe avant-garde remote from that of the tatterdemalion American painters. The leading galleries were the Pierre Matisse, Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century, and the Julien Levy, which, in 1945, gave Gorky his first major solo show. The uptowners embraced Gorky, whose colorful character and beautiful wife, no less than his genius, made him a prime local attraction. André Breton became a close friend and promoter, pronouncing him "the only painter in America," and helping him to title his works. (Many Gorky titles are jewels of laconic lyricism: "The Liver Is the Cock's Comb," "Water of the Flowery Mill," "Diary of a Seducer," "One Year the Milkweed.") The prudish Gorky was an odd duck in this arch, gamy, free-loving company, and his association with it alienated him from his downtown compeers—including de Kooning, who nonetheless loyally defended him. Gorky had already been at odds with the swaggering Pollock, who sneered at his tenderly brushed work, deeming it epicene. Pollock's champion, Greenberg, lashed out at Gorky in a review in *The Nation*, raising a suspicion that he "lacked independence and masculinity of character." The slur made Gorky frantic. Between uptown cynicism and downtown machismo, his was a spirit besieged.

Matta is the villain in the frightening climax of Herrera's biography, though such are her powers of sympathy that a reader can't quite hate him. Jeanne Reynal wrote to Mougouch about "little two-penny cads like Matta," who abandoned one wife when she gave birth to twins and cheated on a second (who cheated on him with Pierre Matisse). Matta was an amatory multi-tasker. He pursued Mougouch. Amused but scornful, she saw him as "a spoiled boy who wants to masquerade as de Sade." Then a cascade of calamities befell Gorky, starting in 1946, when his studio at the Sherman estate of a wealthy architect, where the Gorkys had begun staying the year before, burned down with much of the artist's work in it. Later that year, he had an operation for rectal cancer, which forced him to use a colostomy bag. He became severely and sometimes violently depressed, except during intervals of inspired work. On June 17, 1948, the unhappy Mougouch began an affair with Matta, whose indiscretion quickly made it common knowledge. "It was perhaps the worst thing I ever did," Mougouch told Herrera, "but I did it." In a car crash on June 26th, Gorky's neck was broken and his painting arm was temporarily paralyzed. Writhing in traction, he raged at the nurses who urged him to be brave: "Why on earth should I be brave? I've spent my whole life making myself tremble like a leaf at whatever happens, and now you want me to be like an unpeeled onion. I have no more skins." Back in Sherman, wearing a bulky brace, he drank heavily. He arranged to meet Matta in Central Park and tried pathetically to beat up the younger man. He endeavored to control his anger with Mougouch, but one night he got drunk and went on a rampage. He pushed her down a flight of stairs, then tried to reassure his daughters, telling them, "My little darlings, you must realize I'm an artist and artists sometimes have to act a bit crazy. That's why I'm like this now. Do you understand?" The next day, July 16th, Mougouch fled with the girls to Virginia. Five days later, Gorky was dead.

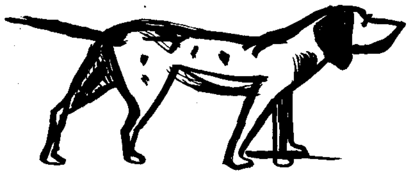
Gorky's suicide was a shock and perhaps an efficacious goad to the New York painters, whose revolutionary styles were taking definitive form. Gorky himself was no revolutionary, but it was clear to many that his hand-to-hand wrestling with Picasso had justified them all. In 1949, de Kooning wrote a letter to the editor of *Art News*, protesting a review that had cited him as an influence on Gorky. He said, "When, about fifteen years ago, I walked into Arshile's studio for the first time, the atmosphere was so beautiful that I got a little dizzy and when I came to, I was bright enough to take the hint immediately. If the bookkeepers think it necessary continuously to make sure of where things and people come from, well then, I come from 36 Union Square." In another encomium, de Kooning made startling use of the future tense: "I tell you one thing, some of his paintings will be much better than some of the ones by Picasso, Matisse, El Greco." The implication is that quality is not inherent in works of art but is something that happens to them.

Herrera modestly makes no firm assessment of Gorky's standing among the modern masters, but her book helps to clear the way for one. Her circumstantial appreciation of the artist and his times counters the standard distortions of Abstract Expressionism: Greenbergian modernism, which rates painters by their roles in a forward march toward color-field abstraction; he-man triumphalism, with what Harold Rosenberg called the Action painters as cowboy conquistadores; and anti-American critiques of the movement as an ideological construct of the Cold War. Gorky, besides lacking a sock-in-the-eye trademark look, lends no support to those stories. Thus his persistent obscurity—which is overcome one person at a time, by stepping up to his pictures and looking at them. Having done so myself, I find that "better"—de Kooning's word—fits the experience. By comparison, even Picasso, and certainly Pollock, can seem to sacrifice too much poetry at the altar of grandeur. Hard to use for or against any idea, Gorky is impossible to use up. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

You Look Nice Today, *by Stanley Bing (Bloomsbury; $24.95).* Bing's satires of the business world have the allure of inside dope, given that their pseudonymous author is also a corporate executive. His latest novel concerns one Robert (Harb) Harbert, who seems too human to last at the Global Fiduciary Trust Company: "More than one fellow officer had told him that his need to trivialize and ridicule corporate life would get the better of him one of these days." In fact, Harb's undoing is his compassion for his secretary, an apparently vulnerable creature named CarolAnne. She repays his cloying kindnesses (generous raises, a car, an apartment) with a harassment suit. The second half of the novel is a series of transcripts from the trial. Unfortunately, the courtroom animates Bing's comic gift less effectively than the daily grind of the office and the soul-smothering masquerade of being a company man.

A Window Across the River, *by Brian Morton (Harcourt; $25).* Isaac and Nora—he's a photographer, she's a writer—were once a couple. After a five-year separation, a late-night telephone call draws them together, but their reunion, as Morton reveals in his affecting third novel, becomes increasingly problematic. Nora is ready to break up with her boyfriend, a professor who wants to become a "public intellectual." Isaac, who always believed that he and Nora were destined for one another, is frustrated by the world's indifference to his photography. What's more, he is about to become a character in one of Nora's unnervingly lifelike short stories. Morton is particularly skilled at describing the sharp rattle of artistic failure, and at bringing to life the streets and rooms of New York, where the fates of his lonely and desperate characters unfold.



The Pinochet File, *by Peter Kornbluh (New Press; $29.95).* For Chileans, September 11th marks a different tragedy—the anniversary of the 1973 coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. This timely book weaves together thirty years of declassified documents with a gripping narrative of America's involvement in the affair. At a National Security Council meeting in 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said of Allende, "We want to do everything we can to hurt him and bring him down," and a C.I.A. memo from the same year describes efforts of a key ally "to increase the level of terrorism in Santiago." This terrorism included the assassination of René Schneider, the constitutionalist commander-in-chief of Chile's armed forces, which was carried out with C.I.A.-provided funds and submachine guns. The evidence that Kornbluh has gathered is overwhelming. As Colin Powell recently remarked about the United States' role in the Pinochet coup, "It is not a part of American history that we are proud of."

A Railroad Atlas of the United States in 1946: Volume 1, *by Richard C. Carpenter (Johns Hopkins; $65).* Surely one of the most appealingly eccentric publishing ventures of the year, this volume of maps was begun by Carpenter, a railroad enthusiast, more than a decade ago. Using colored inks to represent the various local rail companies, he has set about drawing by hand—down to the last coaling tower—the 254,037-mile United States railroad network as it was in 1946. The system was then at its height, swelled by wartime gasoline rationing and not yet depleted by the rise of highway and air transport. This first volume stretches northwest from Grand Central to North Girard, on the shores of Lake Erie (served by the New York Central Railroad), and southwest down to Anthras, Tennessee (on the Southern Railway). The next three volumes in the series will cover New England, the Great Lakes, and the South, after which, if Carpenter's colored inks have not yet run dry, he may expand his project westward.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

BACKGROUND MUSIC

István Szabó's "Taking Sides."

BY ANTHONY LANE

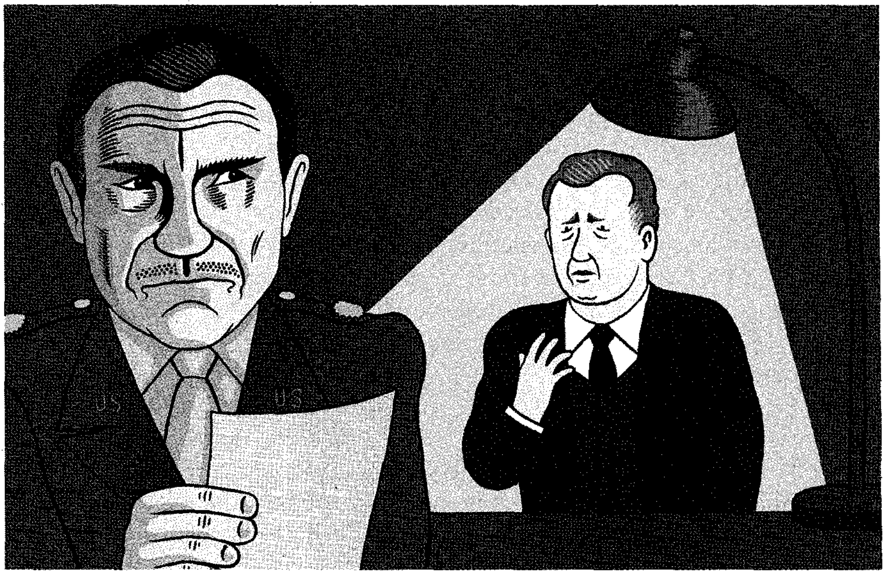
Did anybody look like Wilhelm Furtwängler, apart from Wilhelm Furtwängler? Many photographs exist of the conductor on his podium, and they offer more than an inkling of the attention that he compelled. What a combination: the knobbly leanness of a high jumper, the distracted glare of a chess freak, and the long-necked sorrow of a vulture that doesn't know where its next dead zebra is coming from. He even had little wings of hair tufting out from the sides of his head, as if to stress the already unmistakable fact that his mind was on higher things.

The hair is the only physical detail that survives in Stellan Skarsgård's performance in "Taking Sides," a dramatized inquiry into one of the stormier passages in Furtwängler's existence, when he was accused, after the Second World War, of complicity with the Nazis. Skarsgård has a soft and fleshy air; you want to prod him for weakness and secret excess (an unsettling appeal that has served him in films as different as "Ronin" and "Breaking the Waves"), whereas Furtwängler wasn't much more than skin laid directly over skull. Nevertheless, Skarsgård delivers a fine, unsparing study of nobility laid low—or, at any rate, forced to admit that it has stooped and soiled itself in the halls of the ignoble.

Enter Major Steve Arnold (Harvey Keitel), whose job is to question Furtwängler ahead of his appearance before the American de-Nazification committee. "Find him guilty," Arnold is told, and if you flinch when he first refers to "the bandleader," just wait till the climactic rant, when he turns on this high priest of the German repertoire and calls him, face to face, "you fucking piece of shit." That is pure invention, but it makes a change from the flower-strewn reverence with which, to this day, leading conductors tend to be treated, and, to Keitel's credit, he uses the rasp of his delivery and that weird, shovel-shaped head of his to drive home the scurrilous dig.

This was the essence of the Allied beef: Furtwängler had stayed. Other artists, including fellow-conductors such as Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, had fled, often under duress, at the start of the Nazis' reign. Furtwängler not only remained but remained in power, and in dismayingly close proximity to those who held true power. He conducted both the Berlin and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras during the war, and shuttled around the occupied territories soothing the souls of newly repressed peoples with selections from German composers. For many opponents of Nazism, this was proof of guilt, no matter how strongly Furtwängler—backed by the German de-Nazification court, which cleared him of all charges—declared his innocence. For example, he fought to protect his players and their families, and one of his biographers, Fred K. Prieberg, has estimated that Furtwängler "helped at least eighty people who were at risk." Eighty is a speck next to six million, but it is far from negligible; on the other hand, how many listeners, Jewish or Gentile, heard the Berlin concerts and assured themselves that no land in which the estimable Dr. Furtwängler could operate so freely, and so fruitfully, could pose a barbaric threat? He saw himself as guarding the fires of German culture, yet that made him exactly the kind of front man that the regime required in its desire for cultural continuity—Göring even made him a Prussian Privy Councillor, which is not something that you want on your résumé. Furtwängler never conducted at a Nuremberg rally, but he did perform the night *before* a Nuremberg rally; and if he was smart enough, confronted with the Führer, to keep his baton in his right hand and thus find an excuse not to give the Nazi salute, well, how smart was he to be pouring his transcendent gifts into such unsuitable ears in the first place?

"Taking Sides" is not, fortunately, the wet blanket that is promised by the dullness of its title. It was directed by István Szabó, whose first shot at the problems of politicized art was "Mephisto," in 1981. The writer is Ronald Harwood, who adapted the script from his own play but, as is generally the custom, didn't adapt it quite enough. Poor Skarsgård has to utter lines like "I walked a tightrope between exile and the gallows," which nobody would dream of saying outside the bounds of a British stage. The movie functions most efficiently as a two-hander between the accuser and the accused, and attempts to open it up are doomed to irrelevance; a useful chat be-



Harvey Keitel and Stellan Skarsgård in a movie about Wilhelm Furtwängler.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

tween Major Arnold and a second violinist in the Berlin Philharmonic—one of many musicians who claimed political indifference but turned out to be members of the Nazi Party—is wrecked by panicky lurches in continuity, as the scene leaps from jetty to boat to sunlit glade.

For a while, I smelled a subplot. Major Arnold has an American assistant called Lieutenant Wills (Moritz Bleibtreu) and a German secretary called Emmi Straube (Birgit Minichmayr), and I lived in hope that the two of them might buy a jar of black-market schnapps and work out some postwar ways to unwind after a heavy day's Furtwängling. No such luck. She may have a prim, wide-mouthed allure, but he is a dud and a drip who would barely notice if she slouched into the office dressed like Sally Bowles. And so the film is left to the devices of its leads, who dispense with courtesies and slug it out with loaded principles. When Furtwängler claims, in common with many of his countrymen, to have had no clue about what was happening in the camps, Arnold fires back with the unanswerable: if the Jews weren't in danger, why did they need saving?

The deep drawback of "Taking Sides" is that it forgets to be interested in music. It is swayed by the idea of music as a calling, and as a tool of civilization, but not by the surges of the stuff itself. When a director uses the beginning of Beethoven's Fifth three times in one picture, you know that he has decided to play it safe. (Szabó made another music film, "Meeting Venus," in 1990, with Glenn Close as an operatic diva. Don't even go there.) Only once is Skarsgård called upon to copy Furtwängler's mysterious, air-sculpting manner on the podium (he was famously scornful of mere time-beating), and only once is a piece of music adduced as evidence: Arnold puts on a record of Bruckner's Seventh—Furtwängler conducting the Adagio—and points out that it was played on Berlin radio immediately after the announcement of Hitler's death.

Harwood and Szabó have equipped their movie with a kind of passionate balance, which is no mean feat, but they seem to assume that the Furtwängler dilemma, thus poised, will never end. Music lovers, however, who can harden their hearts against pretty well anything in the quest for rapture, seem to have taken the conductor's side and settled the matter for themselves. Furtwängler is like Artur Schnabel or Maria Callas: he must be heard. Track down his recordings from before the war, then switch to those made (especially those made live) during and after the conflict; only the incorrigibly cloth-eared would deny the sense of upheaval. By current standards, Furtwängler was a laudably poor salesman of his own genius, and he was no less feeble than the rest of us at self-interrogation, but, somehow, when you listen to his 1944 recording of Bruckner's Ninth, or to his Beethoven's Seventh from the previous year, all the frustrated longing, the fool's agony, the stubbornness, and—who knows?—the shame of Furtwängler's experience under the heel of evil transform his performances into exploratory and even redeeming acts.

So who should see this film? Furtwängler groupies will find plenty to quibble with, although I was rather impressed to learn that he found time to father a brood of illegitimate children. I had no idea that the man who recorded the one indispensable "Tristan" was also a maestro in the sack, although I guess the two facts cling together quite nicely. Above all, there are the hands. At the start, Furtwängler is warmly greeted by a Nazi official; Skarsgård extends his palm and pauses for half a second, for a shudder of doubt and dread, before committing it to the shake. Better still, the film closes with footage of the real Furtwängler, clasping hands with Goebbels at the end of a triumphal concert; in slow closeup, we see him transfer a bunched handkerchief from one hand to the other, left to right, as if the stain could be quickly wiped away. It's a piercing sight, and it insures that we don't walk out of this movie whistling Beethoven. We come out thinking of Macbeth. ◆

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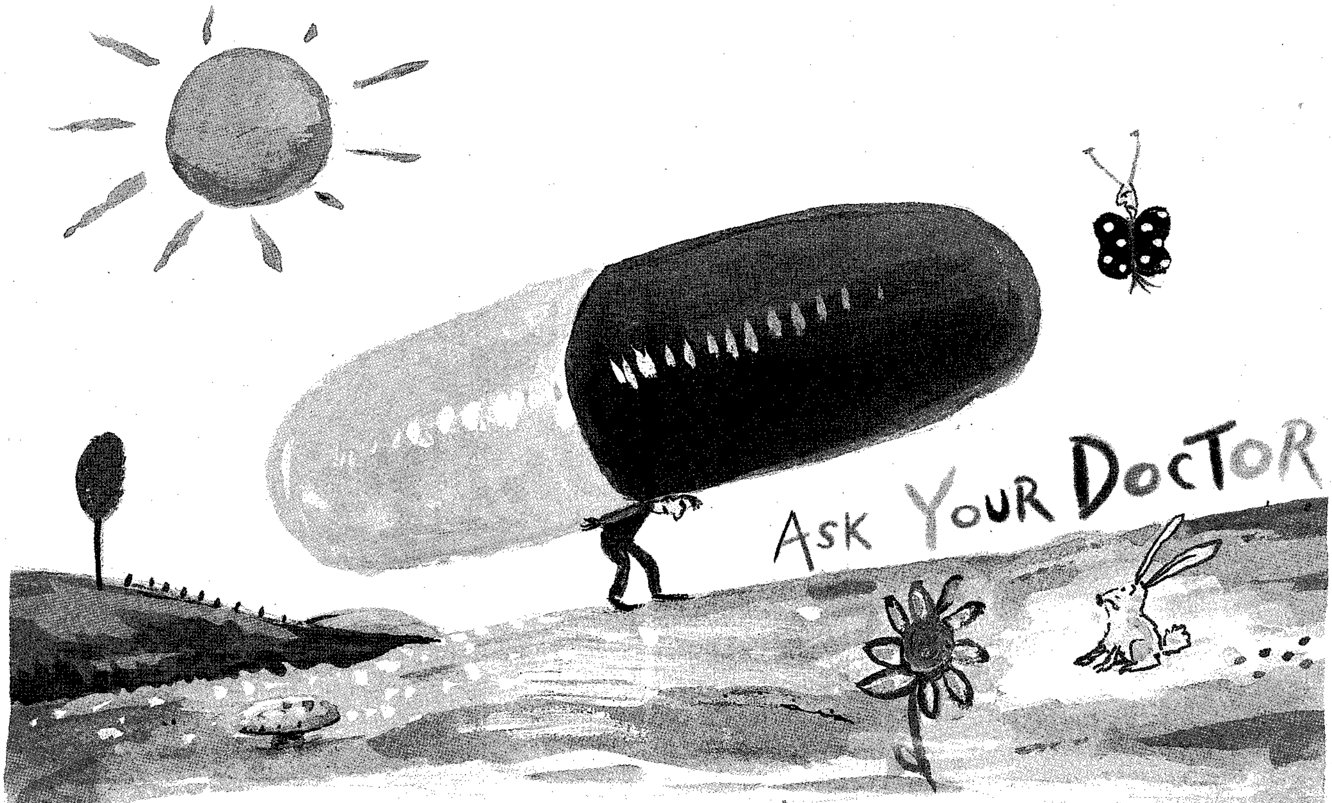

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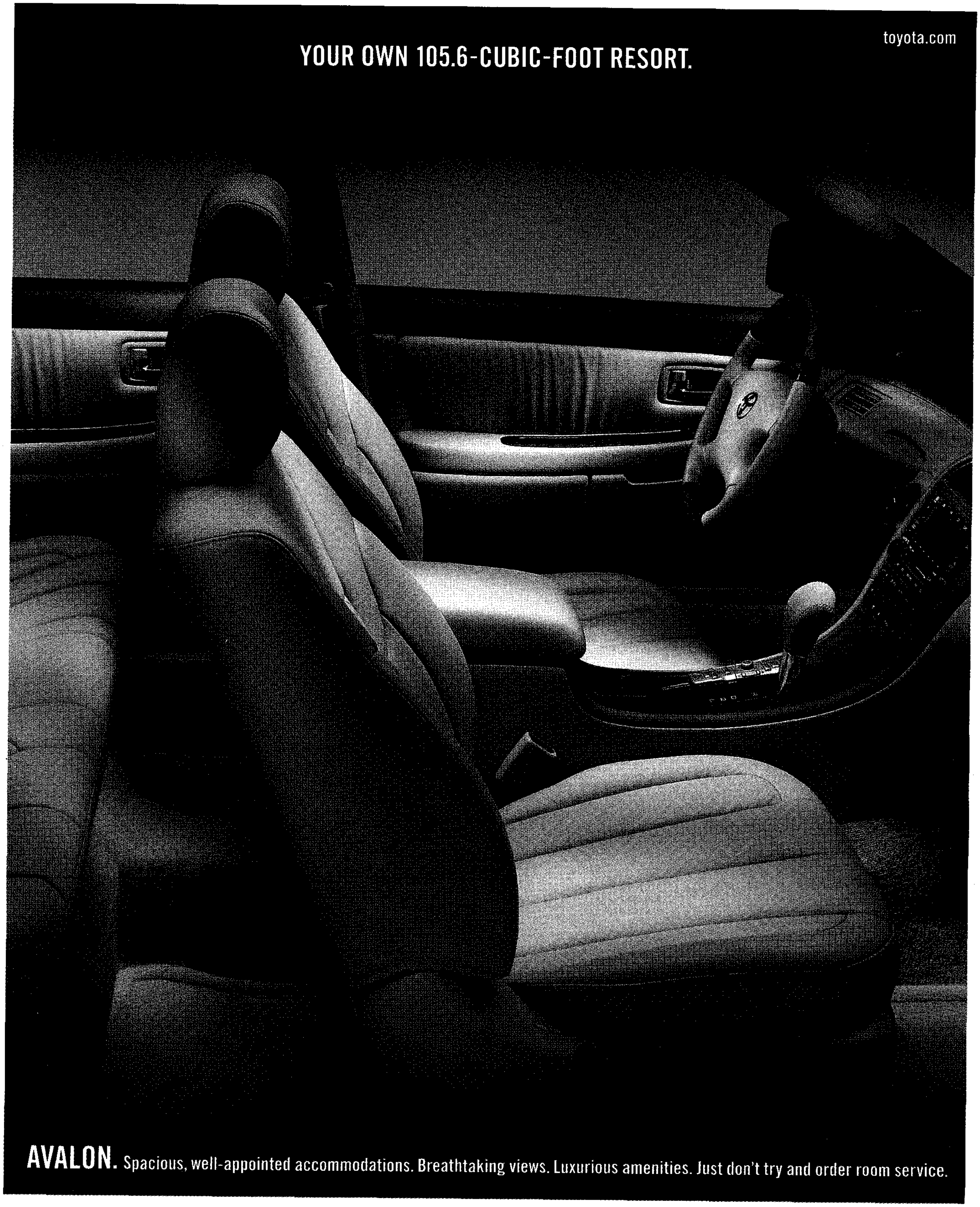
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